The Hudson Review

EDITORS: *William Arrowsmith, Joseph Bennett, Frederick Morgan*
MANAGING EDITOR: *Lisa Dyer*

VOLUME V, NUMBER 4 WINTER 1953

The Swimmers (*verse*)	ALLEN TATE	471
The Critical Intimidation	JOHN HOLLOWAY	474
East of the Sun and West of the Moon (*verse*)	W. S. MERWIN	496
Four Poems	WILDER BENTLEY	510
With a reproduction of a painting by the author		
Three Poems	THEODORE ROETHKE	514
Five Poems	ROBERT GRAVES	517
The Mouse in the Macaroon (*verse*)	DONALD A. STAUFFER	520
A Beautiful Night for Orion (*story*)	RICHARD CLAY	522
A Reading of the Sonnets	PATRICK CRUTTWELL	554
Christmas with Larceny Coming (*story*)	HERBERT GOLD	571
Paris Letter	JOSEPH FRANK	582
Broadway Letter	WILLIAM BECKER	593
Reviews:		
Long Sequacious Notes	NORTHROP FRYE	603
Henry Adams: The Public and Private View	DANIEL AARON	608
The Vision of Henry Green	ROBERT PHELPS	614
Index to Volume V		621

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 439 West Street, New York 14, N. Y. Subscriptions $3.50 per year in U. S. and Canada; foreign $4.00. Single copy, $1.00; in Canada, $1.15. U. S. distributor: B. de Boer, P. O. Box 761, Hoboken, N. J. Business and subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Rates in England: Subscriptions 25/ per year; single copy 7/6d. Distributor in France: Nouvelles Messageries de la Presse Parisienne, 111 Rue Réaumur, Paris 2. Rates in France: Subscriptions 1200 fr. per year; single copy 400 fr. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright 1953 by the Hudson Review, Inc. Registered U. S. Patent Office. Entered as second class matter June 25, 1948 at the Post Office at New York, New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS FROM CHICAGO

SYMBOLISM AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

By CHARLES FEIDELSON, JR. A critical study of the theory and practice of symbolism in American literature — particularly as exemplified in the writing of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, and Emerson—from the seventeenth century to the middle of the nineteenth. Mr. Feidelson places the American symbolists in historical perspective by connecting them with the modern literature toward which they were developing. **$6.50**

A READING OF GEORGE HERBERT

By ROSEMOND TUVE. An examination of Herbert's poetry by a critic of unusual perception and distinguished scholarship. Miss Tuve, author of *Elizabethan* and *Metaphysical Imagery* analyzes the Christian symbolism and new expression to familiar images found in Herbert. **$5.00**

MALLARMÉ

By WALLACE FOWLIE. In this first over-all, critical study in English of the most influential French poet since Baudelaire, Mr. Fowlie distinguishes Mallarmé's place in the history of modern poetry and analyzes his principal poems. With 10 line drawings by Matisse. **$5.00**

CRITICS AND CRITICISM: ANCIENT AND MODERN

Edited by RONALD S. CRANE. A collection of twenty essays of the "Chicago School" of critics constituting a re-examination of the bases of criticism past and present. **$6.00**

THE ILIAD OF HOMER

Translated by RICHMOND LATTIMORE. ". . . Mr. Lattimore has succeeded brilliantly. For our generation it is hard to imagine a better Homer."—*Basil Davenport, New York Times.* **$4.50**

At your bookstore, or from

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

5750 Ellis Av., Chicago 37, Ill.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ALLEN TATE

The Swimmers[1]

Kentucky water, clear springs: a boy fleeing
To waters under the dry Kentucky sun;
His little friends of Nomen with him, seeing

Long shadows of grapevine wiiggle and run
Over the green swirl; mullein under the ear
Soft as Nausicaä's palm; sullen fun

Brutal as childhood's thin harmonious tear:
O fountain, bosom source undying-dead
Replenish me the spring of love and fear

And give me back the eye that looked and fled
When a thrush idling in the tulip tree
Unwound the cold dream of the copperhead.

—Along the creek the road was winding; we
Felt the quicksilver sky. I see again
The five companions of that odyssey:

Bill Eaton, Charlie Watson, "Nigger" Layne
The doctor's son, Harry Dueslér who played
The flute; Tate, with the water on his brain.

Dog-days: the dusty leaves where rain delayed
Hung low on poison-oak and scuppernong,
For we were following the active shade

Of water, that bells and bickers all night long.
"No more'n a mile," Layne said. All five stood still.
Listening, I heard what seemed at first a song;

Peering, I heard the hooves come down the hill.
The posse passed, twelve horse; the leader's face
Was worn as limestone on an ancient sill.

Then, as sleepwalkers shift from a hard place
In bed, and rising to keep a formal pledge
Descend a ladder into empty space,

[1]Part III of a poem of some length, now in progress.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We scuttled down the bank below a ledge
And marched stiff-legged in our common fright
Along a hog-track by the riffle's edge:

Into a world where sound shaded the sight
Dropped the dull hooves again; the horsemen came
Again, all but the leader. It was night

Momently and I feared: eleven same
Jesus-Christers unmembered and unmade,
Whose Corpse had died again in dirty shame.

The bank then levelling in a speckled glade
We stopped to breathe above the swimming-hole;
I gazed at its reticulated shade

Recoiling in blue fear, and felt it roll
Over my eyes and ears and lift my hair
Like seaweed tossing on a sunk atoll.

I rose again. Borne on the copper air
A distant voice green as a funeral wreath
Against a grave: "That dead nigger there."

The melancholy sheriff slouched beneath
A giant sycamore; shaking his head
He plucked a sassafras twig and picked his teeth:

"We come too late." He spoke to the tired dead
Whose ragged shirt soaked up the viscous flow
Of blood in which It lay discomfited.

A butting horse-fly gave one ear a blow
And glanced off, as the sheriff kicked the rope
Loose from the neck and hooked it with his toe

Away from the blood.—I looked back down the slope;
The friends were gone that I had hoped to greet.—
A single horseman came at a fast lope

And pulled up at the hanged man's horny feet;
The sheriff noosed the feet, the other end
The stranger tied to his pommel in a neat

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Slip-knot. I saw the Negro's body bend
And straighten, as a fish-line cast transverse
Yields to the current that it must subtend.

The sheriff's God-damn was a facile curse
Not for the dead but for the blinding dust
That boxed the cortège in a cloudy hearse

And dragged it towards our town. I knew I must
Not stay till nightfall in that silent road;
Sliding my bare feet into the warm crust

I hopped the stonecrop like a panting toad
Mouth open, following the heaving cloud
That floated to the courthouse square its load

Of limber corpse that took the sun for shroud.
There were three figures in the dying sun
Whose light were company where three was crowd.

My breath crackled the dead air like a shotgun
As, sheriff and the stranger disappearing,
The faceless head lay still. I could not run

Or walk, but stood. Alone in the public clearing
This private thing was owned by all the town,
Though never claimed by us within my hearing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN HOLLOWAY

The Critical Intimidation

I

WHEN PHILOSOPHERS TURN TO CRITICISM, critics sometimes give them a cool reception. They often deserve one. They hope, perhaps, and the critics fear, that by some ingenious line or argument they can turn the flank of all that critics have been doing by themselves: in face of this, critics are both uneasy and sceptical. They are right to be sceptical. The discipline of one activity of thought may give useful or even illuminating hints to another; but, as in every discipline, the exact, the *exact* course of the right approach to art—rightly directed criticism in its full sense—can be learnt in approaching art and cannot be learnt in approaching anything else whatever. This for the simplest of all reasons: that art is, in Bishop Butler's well-known words (already borrowed by T. S. Eliot), "what it is, and not another thing".

Yet this truism seems to be the most elusive of all important critical truths—so that it not only eludes philosophers (which is excusable) but plenty of critics too. They cannot, as it were, believe their good fortune—that the only place to learn fully about what they do is where they do it, within the field of art. And philosophy can rarely do more to help criticism than free it from errors, or crudified truths, that perhaps in fear, it has allowed in from outside itself—errors deriving sometimes from philosophy, sometimes from science or psychology or even just the general climate of thought of the time.

The purpose of this article is to locate, and confiscate, some of these borrowed mistakes. And it may save some readers the trouble of going further, and help to retain those I should like to retain, if I emphasize that nothing will be done to transmogrify criticism by any philosopher's abracadabra, or to suggest that something in the latest philosophy provides criticism with its first proper basis. There will be no parallel to Mr. Wellek's breathtaking discovery that a poem is a system of systems of norms of intersubjective ideal concepts.[1] There will be nothing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like this, because if recent developments in philosophy suggest anything about such formulations, they suggest that those who want to solve problems outside philosophy are not normally obliged to solve problems inside it first. For example, philosophers have discussed whether or not a chair is (somewhat like Mr. Wellek's poem) really a system of systems of intersubjective hypothetical sense-data: but the question is not obligatory for those who wish to identify, say, Hepplewhite chairs, or handsome ones. Of course, it is possible that the principle of which this is an illustration may not be true after all; or perhaps it is possible that, though true, the literary work of art (especially if it is what Mr. Wellek says) constitutes an exception to it. But there seems to be something more urgent to do than find out.

II

It is now thirty years since criticism received a really large injection from philosophy, for it has not done so since Richards based the principles of literary criticism (broadly speaking) on the meaning of meaning. In fact, of course, what he did had its roots deep in the intellectual soil of the time: he was accommodating the study of literature to an outlook for which science was the dominant mode of intellectual activity. Art was being found a place in a world of Fact. Richards' varied and fertile mind led him in passing to say may striking things not always along this one line, but this clearly is the main line. Keats is a more *efficient* poet than Wilcox; states of mind are valuable as they reduce waste and frustration; art can be justified in serious terms because it is a stabilizer and organizer; above all, the very texture of literature (or at least poetry) tends to satisfy the scientific norm, though in a somewhat unexpected way; for its distinctive feature is to be a kind of encyclopaedic suggestive shorthand. It is not to "appeal to the imagination" or any other special faculty, and not (like pseudo-statements) to evoke emotions; but essentially it is to be a complex though implicit texture of detail; of apparent fact, indeed, though this was odd enough, since Richards emphasized too that the statements which constituted poetry were falsehoods. Certainly, for Richards, the integration of this detail is what

[1]R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature*, p. 151-2, 157.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enables the poem to have its unique integrating and appeasing effect on the individual; but in the first place the difference between good integrations and bad ones is simply in the number of units that they integrate.

This account is extremely brief, but so it should be, for the ground is familiar. Perhaps less familiar, is the fact that when Richards met the objections to his view, he did not weaken but emphatically confirmed his allegiance to science as a norm. For he took two further steps (in retrospect they were plainly gestures of desperation) to make that view adequate and they are precisely the steps that J. S. Mill took seventy years before, when he was trying to rescue utilitarian ethics from the rigidly scientific model his father had formed it on. Seeing how unlikely it was that anyone would think goodness identical with mere quantity of pleasure (whatever that is), Mill the younger explained that some pleasures were lower than others—pushpin, one comprehendingly remembers, being lower than poetry. Richards in his turn connected good art not simply with "the fine ordering of responses", and the "appeasement" or sense of "reconciliation" that this brings, but with "the level of organization" at which the appeasement or reconciliation takes place. In both cases equally, there is behind the first difference between good and bad a second difference, and it is this which is apparently decisive. Only apparently, because behind the second difference there is in each case a third. For Mill, challenged to prove his claim that poetry was "higher" than pushpin, could only reply that those with equal acquantance with each were all sure it was; and Richards, looking for something that could prove one integration more adequate than another, in the end had to say that those with adequate experience of both—Keats and Wilcox were his examples—could be relied on to choose the one we all know is right anyway.

All this happened twenty-five years ago; it has been modified by Richards himself; and its errors have by now been abundantly pointed out. There is no need to lose more time on it, provided that within the complexity of the theory and all its qualifications we hold to the central fact: that Richards, working through a philosophical theory about statements and value-judgements, and a speculative-psychology theory about comprehension, was finding a place for poetry in a scheme of things where science was the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

norm. This shows itself in at least three ways. First, it shows in Richards' conviction that literature is not to be judged by the *statement* it makes—by the truth of what it says. Probably it says nothing; if it does say something, that is probably false; and since true statement is the prerogative of science, criticism must have no concern with it. Second, it shows in his unconcern for the ethical views and judgements sometimes implicit in literature (pseudo-statements to Richards) and in his denial of any aesthetic sense—for to assert such a sense is one way (though a naive one) of justifying direct judgements of value in art and these, for Richards, are also pseudo-statements. Last, and above all, it shows in what he tried to provide as the proper method of criticism: a poem, for example, being rather like a scientific specimen, the complex structure of which needs to be laid bare, and a critic requiring the detachment, fine discrimination, patience, persistence, and sharp cutting-edge of a biologist—with the underlying suggestion that *that is all*. For under this progressive dissection, the good poem turns out to have a delicate and subtle organization, and the bad one to have, not another kind of organization, but no organization whatever. Evaluation need not take place. Analysis veritably disintegrates the bad; the good is proved good by standing up to it.

III

Now comes the crucial point. This same bias towards a scientific norm of statement and method shows very widely in modern criticism; and it shows, moreover, not just in the work of critics like Richards who were avowed sympathizers with the scientific outlook, but also, more insidiously, in critics of a kind exactly opposite. In particular, it shows in T. S. Eliot's early essays, although these were written well before *The Meaning of Meaning*, and although Eliot soon came to disagree wholeheartedly with Richards. This is a not often stressed aspect of the poet and critic who has done more than anyone else to diagnose what literature and society have lost through the encroachments of the narrowly scientific mind; and clearly it was never a dominant aspect. But when Eliot wrote "In matters of great importance the critic must not coerce, and he must not make judgements of worse or better. He must simply elucidate" (*The Perfect Critic*), one sees a clear

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

though slight trace of the same attitude to value-judgements as Richards'. When in *The Function of Criticism* Eliot wrote "the most important qualification which I have been able to find . . . is that a critic must have a very highly developed sense of fact", or "interpretation . . . is only legitimate when it is not interpretation at all, but merely putting the reader in possession of facts which he would otherwise have missed", he was displaying how he also inclined to think of scientific statement as the norm. Finally, when in the first of these essays we discover "the scientific mind . . . there is no other intelligence than this, and so far as artists and men of letters are intelligent (we may doubt whether the level of intelligence among men of letters is as high as among men of science) their intelligence is of this kind", there is no need to argue the point further.

Other critics, of course, have been far more inclined than Eliot to think that science has established a new norm of authenticity, and that this new norm has discredited criticism of the older kind and obliged the critic to come to terms. John Crowe Ransom's statement in the Preface to *The World's Body* (1938) is one illustration: referring to science, he asserts that we must find a poetry which does not deny "what we in our strange generation actually are: men who have aged in these pure intellectual disciplines, and cannot play innocent without feeling very foolish." Another is Herbert Read's homage to psychology: it "impinges directly on the province of the literary critic—raids it and despoils it and leaves it a sorry desolation of unconscious prejudices . . . in this situation the critic must retaliate, and pick from the science of psychology his brightest weapons".[2] But Read's observation, though more outspoken, is incomparably less significant than Eliot's. One is the overt act of allegiance which has largely created Read's contribution to modern criticism; the other is an incidental concession to the opposing camp, and it did not create, but runs counter to the main direction of Eliot's achievement. For if anything is central to Eliot's earlier criticism it is what he said was central, "the problem of the integrity of poetry, with the repeated assertion that when we are considering poetry we must consider it primarily as poetry and not another thing".[3] And of this attitude—from which modern criticism has enormously benefited—conceding any sort of hegemony to science is a distortion.

---

[2]Introduction to *Selected Essays*, 1938.
[3]Preface to the 1928 Edition of *The Sacred Wood*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IV

From the dominant side of Eliot's work, more than from anywhere else, has come the widespread contemporary grasp of poetry as something that is significant by having the texture and the structure of a distinctive thing and a thing of art. This insight—perhaps it is fair to call it a telling and emphatic restatement of a perennial insight—has brought with it its own *method* of coming to a full comprehension of particular poems: that close. scrupulous attention to texts which is to be seen in the "New Criticism" as practised in the United States by Allen Tate, or John Crowe Ransom, or Cleanth Brooks. But in the wider and perhaps coarser diffusion of this method the influence of Richards, at least in Great Britain, is not negligible; which is a significant fact. For it means that this new method is not a homogenous creation, but has combined two radically opposed trends. It has combined Eliot and Richards; or if you like it has drawn upon both the science-influenced undercurrent, and the independent main current in Eliot's work. Predominantly, it has come from a keener sense of what is distinctive of poetry, and of the fine contour of its organization of language. As far as this has been the impelling power behind the New Criticism, it has been nothing short of an illumination. But hidden away in that movement, though leading paradoxically to a very similar kind of detailed analysis, has been the quite opposite notion that scientific assertion is the norm, and that poetry is reputable at bottom because, in a quite peculiar and unexpected manner, it actually satisfies this norm—satisfies it by being (though cryptic) denser than prose, fuller than prose, with a subtle order of complexity that superficially departs from the kind of reality that science finds acceptable, but is really an example of it. And these two quite opposed attitudes seem to have brought it about that the New Criticism, though chiefly coming much closer to its poetry, has occasionally been driven erratically from it.

It is not fanciful to see Eliot's celebrated essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919), which did so much to inaugurate the whole movement, as an emblem of this two-sidedness. It is in this essay that Eliot described poetry as "a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences", and the hint for a new critical method is plain. It is here too that he rejected two of the common con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fusions about poetry, its being either a personal effusion of soul, or an undifferentiated loftiness: "the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium . . . in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" . . . "it is not the 'greatness', the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process . . . that counts". Yet in elucidating these impeccable statements, Eliot surely revealed how deeply all the time the norm of science had occupied his mind. The intensity of the artistic process is "the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place". Elsewhere chemistry, not metallurgy, supplies the metaphor. The poet is a catalyst; and his mind is a "receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together". And of course the more these metaphors are thought of in the way that we have learnt from Eliot to think about metaphors, the more they lead the mind away from a sensitized idea of poetry as Eliot revealed it, and towards a notion of something on the lines of an elaborate scientific construct, a tour-de-force linguistic protein molecule, of which we can come to an understanding by the mode of attention of the scientist. And when so profound and urgent a tension exists between the substance of an argument, and the imagery that vivifies it, are we not justified, if not in suspecting an uncertainty in the author's own mind, at least in looking for a mixed and to some extent confused impact on his readers? Yet here we have perhaps the most influential prose that Eliot has ever written.

V

The present argument, then, is that the lineage of "close reading" as a critical method is impure; deriving in part from a keener sense of the distinctiveness of poetry, which was an asset; and in part from excessive though perhaps half-conscious respect for science, which was a liability. And the particular form that this hindrance seems to have taken, is a notion that the unravelling of complexity is the one and essential and characteristic form of close reading, and that therefore you cannot have too much of it. The time has now come (and perhaps came some while ago) to illustrate these disparaging generalities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When in *Tension in Poetry* Allen Tate writes "the meaning of poetry is in its 'tension', the full organized body of all the extension and intension we can find in it",[4] one senses, perhaps, that this invitation to apparently unlimited ingenuity may prove dangerous. And it seems to prove dangerous at once. For Mr. Tate goes straight on in the same essay to discuss these lines from Donne's *A Valediction, Forbidding Mourning:*

> *Our two soules therefore, which are one,*
> *Though I must goe, endure not yet*
> *A breach, but an expansion*
> *Like gold to aiery thinesse beate.*

—and his comment runs: "the interesting feature here is the logical contradiction of embodying the unitary non-spatial soul in a spatial image: the malleable gold is a plane whose surface can always be extended mathematically by one-half towards infinity; the souls are this infinity. The finite image of the gold, in extension, logically contradicts the intensive meaning (infinity) which it conveys". Surely, it is fairly clear, on Mr. Tate's own principles, that this has got somehow away from the poem; for an infinity of extension is not at all what the beaten gold, once it is given exact and scrupulous attention, can convey either intensively or otherwise. And there is something in the poem—the "aiery thinnesse" of the gold—that brings this point emphatically before the reader's mind; bringing also, one may add, through this very thinness, and this inability to be expanded indefinitely, its own very definite enrichment of meaning. It brings this enrichment of meaning, surely, through hinting at the fragility (for all that Donne also says to the contrary) of the lovers' separated existence, and the tenderness, like a gold-beater's delicate strokes, with which Donne is bringing about the unavoidable separation. And perhaps it is in things like these, rather than in any logical contradiction, that the "interesting feature" of the comparison resides. But for the present discussion what matters is what led Mr. Tate to analyze these lines as he did; and it is difficult not to believe that it was because the image appeared to offer a structure of meaning as precise as any structure that a scientist finds in a molecule. "Extended mathematically by one-half": this quasi-

[4] *The Limits of Poetry*, p. 83.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scientific precision, one may suspect, intruded itself because, deceptively, it seemed just the kind of thing to find. And if this was so, it was because Mr. Tate (of all people) momentarily allowed the analysis of poetry, as if by an enharmonic change, to revert to the analytic norm of science.

Consider a parallel example from an essay by Cleanth Brooks. In *Irony as a Principle of Structure*[5] he examines Randall Jarrell's controlled and eloquent *Eighth Air Force*:

> *If, in an odd angle of the hutment,*
> *A puppy laps the water from a can*
> *Of flowers, and the drunk sergeant shaving*
> *Whistles* O Paradiso!—*shall I say that man*
> *Is not as men have said: a wolf to man?*
>
> *The other murderers troop in yawning;*
> *Three of them play Pitch, one sleeps, and one*
> *Lies counting missions, lies there sweating*
> *Till even his heart beats: One; One; One.*
> O murderers! . . . *Still this is how it's done:*
>
> *This is a war . . . But since these play, before they die,*
> *Like puppies with their puppy; since, a man,*
> *I did as these have done, but did not die—*

—and so on. The comment begins with stanza one:

> These "murderers", as the poet is casually to call the airmen in the next stanza, display a touching regard for the human values. How, then, can one say that man is a wolf to man, since these men "play before they die, like puppies with their puppy". But the casual presence of the puppy in the hutment allows us to take the stanza both ways, for the dog is a kind of tamed and domesticated wolf, and his presence may prove on the contrary that the hutment is the wolf-den. After all, the timber wolf plays with its puppies.

But there is a basic and surely final objection to this as a model of critical method: that it means there is nothing the poet can definitely *not* say, definitely decline to say. His complexities are explored with a gusto and unreserve against which he cannot hope to exclude anything whatever from his poem, however much he

[5] In *Literary Opinion in America*, ed. M. D. Zabel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

might want to. For it is doubtless true that Randall Jarrell, if he had chosen, could aptly have explored how airmen playing with a pet puppy are like timber-wolves playing with their own puppies; but the fact is that his poem does not do this. At the particular point in it when he writes of playing with the puppy, he focusses attention on quite different aspects of his airmen—aspects no less necessary to the main trend of the poem, and not developed at all, *but denied,* by likening them to timber-wolves (unless of course a wolf is shown to be very different from the idea of a wolf, as this comes in the first stanza). He has, in fact, said that the airmen play "like *puppies* with their puppy"; and, short of rewriting the whole poem just to frustrate this particular critic, it is hard to see how he could have done more to exclude the idea that they were like timber-wolves. Once again, it looks as if a certain kind of solution—in this case "to take the stanza both ways"—as Mr. Brooks says—seemed so much on the right lines that for a moment it took control.

But why, it may be asked, does this exemplify criticism distorted by a norm appropriated from science? Because the notion that there will always be some new complexity, some new hidden inter-relatedness of structure to discover, that certain methods of enquiry can be applied over and over again, and that if they yield anything, then what they yield is really there, is a characteristic of what science takes as its objects; while poems are entities of another kind, and, though they may contain more than their creators deliberately put into them, contain what the text offers and emphatically do not contain what it excludes. But the *cult* of complexity, the notion that a critic always adds to what we see in a poem, and never diminishes or restricts it, appears in criticism because the patterns of scientific thought surreptitiously extend themselves beyond science. It has, perhaps, some slight analogy with a card-game that in England goes by the homely name of *rummy.* The object of this game is to acquire cards so as to make ingenious combinations with them; but for this purpose it is much easier to acquire the cards than to discard them once acquired; and the over-enthusiastic player usually collects with such gusto that he soon has far more than the state of the game will justify. What is required, both here and in criticism, is a principle—or a tact—that will equip one to collect just what it is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proper to collect, and to leave exactly all the rest. And to return to Randall Jarrell's poem and Mr. Brooks' analysis of it, one cannot help feeling that, as with the example taken above from Allen Tate, in the pursuit of an ingenious linkage the critic passed over a simple one. For Mr. Brooks asked "how, then, can one say that man is a wolf to man. . . ." Yet Randall Jarrell's uncertainty is about something tellingly different—"shall I say that man Is not *as men* have said: a wolf to man?"; and the irony in this self-discrediting judgement is exactly what Mr. Brooks knows best how to elucidate, save when the foreign body in the body of his critical theory leads him off into doing something else.

VI

These tinkerings are trivial, unless they can be made to create a clear sense of the tact or principle that they seem to hint at. But what is this tact or principle? Remembering all the time that it will be no ingenious importation from some other discipline, but must emerge from the practice and mis-practice of criticism itself, consider another of Mr. Brooks' critical analyses: his account of Tennyson's poem *Break, Break Break.*[6] Here is the poem:

Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!

[6] In *The Well-Wrought Urn.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Mr. Brooks compares this poem with Tennyson's lyric *Tears, Idle Tears* in *The Princess* and claims, surely with justice, that the latter is the more interesting poem of the two. Yet it seems as if the more varied, complex, and paradoxical poem established itself at once in Mr. Brooks' discussion as the poetic norm; and his preference for it is justified by comments on *Break, Break, Break* which are strikingly and unexpectedly generic. That "stately ships" is "idle and finally irrelevant" is almost the only point of detail; and the main comparison between the two poems, and depreciation of *Break, Break, Break,* is:

> Memory in this poem does not become a kind of life. . . . The poet makes no attempt to connect this activity with its former "actual" life . . . the elements of "the tender grace of a day that is dead" remain frozen at the conventional prose level . . . we are not encouraged to take the poignance of his present memory of it as a ghost from the tomb. The poet does not recognize that his experience represents such an ironical resurrection nor does he allow the metaphors buried in "dead" and "come back" to suffer a resurrection into vigorous poetical life. Of course, the poet need not be concerned with them; I should agree that we have no right to demand that this poem should explore the nature of memory as *Tears, Idle Tears* explores it. At moments, men are unaccountably saddened by scenes which are in themselves placid or even happy.[7] The poet is certainly entitled, if he chooses, to let it go at that. Yet it should be observed that in avoiding the psychological exploration of experience, the poet risks losing dramatic force.

The central point of criticism is clear. Both poems explore something, but *Break, Break, Break,* is much less alive, less vigorously searching in its conduct of the exploration. And three phrases in the passage quoted above—"his experience"; "the nature of memory"; and "the psychological exploration of experience" indicate what is being explored. But there is something about these which makes it easy to overlook an important point, for only the first really emphasizes that each poem explores not "memory" in general, but some one concrete situation which the poem de-

[7] It is virtually certain that in its context this sentence refers to *Break, Break, Break;* though surely it would fit *Tears, Idle Tears* more closely still.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fines and specifies through all its texture; and there is no doubt that in doing this defining, this specifying work, the two poems move, not in the same direction to different lengths, but (however far either goes) in quite different directions. *Tears, Idle Tears* creates for the reader a situation arresting because it shows a memory rising paradoxically into a strange and moving vividness that almost surpasses waking life: small wonder if its texture of expression notably satisfies Mr. Brooks' characteristic demands. But does not *Break, Break, Break* define a situation where memory persistently refuses to spring into a paradoxical life, a flat, a heart-rendingly *un*exceptional situation where the dead are not only dead, but cannot even be remembered except with a barren and frustrating inadequacy? And if so, is it not the least likely thing in the world that this poem, even if it contains *some* element of paradox and double meaning, should be *as* ingeniously paradoxical, *as* intellectually nimble and elaborate, as the other? To doubt this is to take complexity as the essence of poetry, not as (at most) its method; and this, once again, is to supplant what may be discovered about poetry in poems themselves by a norm from an alien, a scientific mode of thought. Or, to put the point in terms not of poetic technique but of poetic subject-matter (a vivid but risky way of putting it), it is to make, in a new direction, the very mistake about poetry that elsewhere Mr. Brooks himself has most effectively diagnosed. For it is to give a preference to a certain kind of *situation*—to that which is fullest of striking contrasts, which is most directly and readily specified through modes of expression that are paradoxical and complex. But it cannot be right to free poetry from the limited range of experience that lends itself to picturesque romantic lyricism, only to shackle it again to another limited range, that which lends itself to "paradox, ambiguity, and ironic contrast".

Struck by the fact that in some sense *Break, Break, Break* is indisputably an "easier" and "thinner" poem than *Tears, Idle Tears,* Mr. Brooks seems to have treated the issue between the poems as settled, and hardly applied his characteristic method to the thin one. But—though I hesitate very much, after criticizing Mr. Brooks, to use his own weapons—there seems to be much in the easier poem that invites just his kind of analysis. For the vainly breaking tide is not only, perhaps, what Tennyson is look-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing at; its ambiguity is to be also an image of the memory that for all its nagging recurrence, never floods properly into the mind; and the quality of this reiterated but useless movement seems to be emphasized through contrast with the casual spontaneity of the children's play and song on the one hand, and the long uninterrupted motion of the ships to their goal on the other. If so, not only does "stately" have work to do after all, but the ambiguity of the memory that, for all its insistence, is a dead memory, is exactly the ambiguity that does reside in "dead" and "come back". And is there not, unmistakeably, an irony in the condescending "O well for . . . but . . ." that indicates sharply how Tennyson valued these trivial pleasures of the sea-side, against the companionship, or love, or both, that he has lost even beyond recall?

If any of this is right, it is because Mr. Brooks, in analysing other poems, has shown one how to find it. And if there is (which I fear) something faintly ridiculous in thus trying to push a method of analysis so much further than it was taken by its virtual originator, there is also something salutary, because the question of *where to stop* becomes absolutely inescapable; of which—one recalls with surprise—the critics of this movement seem to have said nothing at all. If there are *no* limits, though, in using the method, surely this is a fact so important and surprising that it should be established beyond all doubt?

But instead, it is to be refuted beyond all doubt. For suppose that, encouraged by some or all of the suggested paradoxes, ambiguities, and ironies advanced in the last paragraph, one attempts to push further still by exactly the same method. Suppose one argues that the poem, through its whole length, constructs a metaphor defining the kind of influence exerted on Tennyson by whomever he is recalling, rather as the metaphor latent in the breaking tide helps to specify Tennyson's condition of mind as he stood beside the waves. Is there not an ambiguity in the "still voice" that Tennyson tries to catch among the fishermen on this sea-shore? Is the comparison that this begins to hint at not taken further by the other things he mentions—a touch of the hand (with a magic gift of healing?), and the "tender grace" that (ambiguously) seems to have been an influence as well as a way of behaving? Do we not anyway know how Tennyson felt about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Arthur Hallam, who died overseas? Finally, is there not, in view of all this, an ironic second meaning when Tennyson laments that he cannot utter his thoughts?—that, though inexpressibly precious as far as they are memory, they are inexpressible in another sense—too deeply despairing for words—because Tennyson feels he is cut off forever from his Redeemer?

No. It is an entertaining game to play, and it is by no means over even for this one poem; but a game is quite obviously what it has become. Yet the game was not without its instructive side. For its extravagant results come from precisely the same methods as served at first for legitimate analysis of the poem, and along the same general lines, I think, as make up the staple of Mr. Brooks' analyses of other poems; and if the method gives, in this way, sometimes admirable and sometimes wild results, it becomes urgent to trace what can indicate when to take it further and when to stop.[8] This means, to trace the principle underlying, and confirming, the tact mentioned earlier on; a tact that usually stops "close-reading" critics well on the hither side of wildness, but that is more fallible than it need be, because the heredity of close reading is a heredity of hybridism.

The answer, of course, everyone knows. It is that same boring truism which is also the most elusive of critical truths. The principle is simply that the poem decides. There is no *deus ex machina,* no ingenious theory from psychology, philosophy, semantics, semasiology or any other external thing, which can make the critic's work a drill. The poem—the successful poem, that is—decides because, being not an object for quasi-scientific routines of dissection, mechanically applied, but a work of art, it progressively shapes and prescribes its own interpretation. It requires, and indeed can tolerate, no supplementation from outside, no external clues. As the work of comprehension proceeds, the poem creates a fully defined reality which is what it is; and it is this which progressively shows, more and more clearly, what still waits to be added to reach that full and final definition, and what is alien to it. And the situation with *Break, Break, Break,* I take it,

[8]And historical considerations are insufficient. It is not anything historical that *rigidly* excludes the well-known ambiguity in the word "die" from the last line of Goldsmith's "When lovely woman stoops to folly", or even Keats' "Bright star! Would I were steadfast as thou art".

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is simply that as one comes to terms with this poem as a whole, its rhythms, the static quality of its reiterative structure, and the almost myth- or fairytale-like selectivity of its detail, lead one to see that the poem prescribes by its mood a certain fairly definite level of intellectual play, and more and more strongly resists any progressively greater degree of it. The exact line to be drawn depends on a tact for which no principle can substitute, and it may even be that nothing but the basic analogy between what Tennyson is watching and how he is feeling can be admitted into the organization of this poem without overloading it with a complexity that turns it from what it is. But the general point is clear: a poem is a unified experience of which, as we come to know it better, we see that certain things are parts, and certain others emphatically not parts. And fortunately, it is in the uncertain border between these that the importance of a mistake is lowest.

VII

The encroachments of science as a norm show also elsewhere in the "New Criticism": in that important part of it which is concerned to stress the integrity of poetry, and to argue that this integrity significantly restricts the critic in trying to discuss the content or subject-matter of a work, and in particular makes its morality or doctrine plainly not his business. Valuable as this insistence has been, it too seems to contain error and truth mixed; and as the error is diagnosed, comes to look more and more like an alien element brought in through the influence of a foreign discipline. No one is going to say the last word on the perennial topic of form and substance. The rest of this article will try only to diagnose, and then trace to its source, one single particularly important confusion.

This is the confusion, in the New Criticism, of two theories about the content-form or subject-language issue—two theories that have been falsely thought of as virtual twins, to choose between which was a matter of only trivial importance. John Crowe Ransom puts a version of the first when, after defining the moralistic critic as one who wishes "to isolate and discuss the 'ideology' or theme or paraphrase of the poem", he goes on to say that in his view "the business of the literary critic is exclusively with an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aesthetic criticism".[9] Mr. Tate sometimes says the same: "As literary critics we must first of all decide in what respect the literary work has a specific objectivity . . . from my point of view the formal qualities of a poem are the focus of the specifically critical judgement because they partake of an objectivity that the subject-matter, abstracted from the form, wholly lacks".[10] Theme or subject-matter, that is, may be abstracted from the whole texture of the literary work, but the act of abstraction leaves criticism behind. About these formulations there are only two brief points to make at present. First, Mr. Tate may be right that the formal qualities are the focus (indeed, are they not on his view, the whole field?) of the *specifically* critical judgement—the judgement, that is, which is distinctive of the critic, which he makes as of right, and others make if at all only by encroachment. But this "specifically" does not clinch Mr. Ransom's "exclusively". Second, Mr. Tate's change from "the literary work" to simply "the poem" is going to look more significant later on than it does now.

At bottom, the second theory is rigidly incompatible with the first, and its implications are quite different. Yet strangely enough, it can be so phrased as to seem merely a more forthright version of the first; and that is how, in another of his essays, Mr. Tate presents it. "The important question goes further. It is: What is the relation of language to the 'subject' . . .? The question may be *pushed even further*: Is it possible finally to distinguish the language from the subject? Are not language and subject one?"[11] (italics mine). But this second theory is by no means a more forthright alternative; and it *wrecks* the literary critic's chance of limiting his attention to formal qualities, and leaving the ideology or idea or subject over for the "moralistic" critics. For if language and subject are one, nobody can have possession of the subject (as opposed to some attenuated ghost of it) unless he has the critic's expertise with language. The "specific objectivity" of the literary work does not free the critic from consideration of subject or ideology, but is precisely what constrains him to it. No one else can do the job. Mr. Ransom's argu-

[9] *Criticism as Pure Speculation.* See *The Intent of the Critic* (1941), pp. 101-2.
[10] *The Limits of Poetry*, p. 57.
[11] *The Limits of Poetry*, p. 20.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment why the critic could leave "moral criticism" on one side was different from Mr. Tate's; he argued that we can rely on having it with us always. So we can. But unless language and subject are finally distinguishable (and even this first step, notice, must not require the critic's expertise) we shall have it with us always done badly—unless critics do it.

This second view, that the form-subject abstraction is a myth, is fairly clearly the better view, and the view that means most to Mr. Tate; and it is what is behind some of his best accounts of the distinctive achievement of art in words. "The poet . . . is responsible . . . for the mastery of a disciplined language which will not shun the full report of the reality conveyed to him by his awareness."[12] And sometimes Mr. Tate even emphasizes how the writer's subject matter (or whatever we call it) gets its full report only through the things in writing that make writing art: "In the long run, whatever the poet's 'philosophy' . . . by his language shall you know him; the quality of his language is the valid limit of what he has to say".[13] Commenting on Yvor Winters' remark that Babbitt never understood how the moral intelligence gets into poetry, Mr. Tate says "it gets in not as moral abstractions but as form, coherence of image and metaphor, control of tone and of rhythm, the union of these features. So the moral obligation to judge compels us to make not a moral but a total judgement".[14] But this is to yield the whole case. The "us" deserves italics; it can hardly be stressed too much; for that total judgement must be a caricature, or it must be controlled by the critics, whose special skill is with the things that appear in Mr. Tate's catalogue.

Miss Emily and the Bibliographers, which contains this discussion, was addressed mainly to those who do not even recognize the existence of critical categories like image, tone, or rhythm. But for those who do recognize them, they not only constitute a field of enquiry within which the critic moves alone (except for the artist, whose path he follows), but at least with literature they enable both artist and critic to make a special and indeed irreplaceable contribution outside their own field. One can put

[12]The Hudson Review, Autumn 1951, p. 333.
[13]*The Limits of Poetry*, p. 85.
[14]*The Limits of Poetry*, p. 56.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this another way by pointing out that Mr. Ransom's "moral abstractions" bring no one much nearer to morality—to a real comprehension of virtue or sin—than they do to a comprehension of literature. They are the merest bones of morality, they must be made to live, and among many other things literature *can sometimes* powerfully do this. And it should be emphasized further, what it is not perhaps a part of the critic's expertise to know, that this real comprehension of virtue or sin is not any familiarity, however detailed, with principles and rules, but that what lies at its heart is a deep and humane understanding, a wisdom that has grasped "the quality of experience, the total revelation"—Mr. Tate's phrase for what the literary art essentially reveals. Certainly that grasp of the total revelation may be come at otherwise than through literature; and perhaps the contribution of much or even most literature to a specifically moral wisdom is relatively oblique. But at least, the revelation of literature and the wisdom of the moralist do not diverge, they converge.

VIII

Once again, then, it seems as if the New Criticism had hardly demanded enough for itself and for literature. In its anxiety to locate and defend what is distinctive of the literary art, it underestimated how other branches of humane thought must have regard to what that art reveals. The last part of this article is going to suggest briefly that this timidity sprang once again from a strand of deference to the norm of science, a strand that survived all these critics' vigilance against scientific encroachments; and this timidity seems to have taken the form of a half-notion that, save in some special sense, literature might turn out to be either false or meaningless, and another half-notion that, save again in some special sense, it might turn out to be useless.

According to the first of these, what is true properly is science; and poetry must be made to stand on its formal qualities, because ultimately, anything it may state will be shown up by science. When Macbeth says "Out, out brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow . . .", Mr. Tate comments "The lines . . . are certainly not 'true': we know that life is not a shadow, it is a vast realm of biological phenomena".[15] He allows that they are 'true' as a stage

[15] *The Limits of Poetry*, p. 109.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in Macbeth's development, but once we bring their truth anywhere near scientific truth, it collapses. One sees at once how odd this is. It is almost like Mr. Tate writing ironically, and at his best. And in speaking of allegory he says: "there is nothing true but fact. About this fact science alone can instruct us, not with a fundamentally different kind of instruction from the allegorist, but with the same kind, more systematic and efficient . . . mere allegory is a vague and futile kind of science".[16] And it is this same view that the norm of statement is the scientific statement which, among other things, underlies both Mr. Tate's and Mr. Ransom's preference for speaking only of poetry, and for that significant change, in a passage by Mr. Tate that was quoted earlier, from "the literary work" to "the poem". Prose, at a pinch, is expendable. If the critic has nothing to say about a poem's texture, says Mr. Ransom at one point, he "is treating it only insofar as it is prose"[17]—as if prose never had a texture, was never itself literature, was essentially bare science. Mr. Tate's retreat from prose is even clearer: "For Arnold the subject is what we commonly call the prose subject—that is to say, as much of the poetic subject as we can put into ordinary prose. The poet takes it up at the level at which the scientist—or Arnold's simulacrum of him—takes it (= leaves it?) : the level of observation and description. The poet now puts it into language that will bring the inert facts to life and move us".[18] But Mr. Tate has taken, here, too easy and also too dangerous a way to expose the defective notion of poetry that he inflicts on Arnold: for a moment, he uses the same defective notion of prose, and aims only to show that poetry is different. In the face of what he calls, on the very next page, "that remarkably ingenious and dynamic fellow", the modern scientist, with his scientific mode of expression, he makes a present of prose, so as to bring out the essential otherness of poetry. This, of course, is far from Mr. Tate's real and settled notion of prose; but the point is that, when he really feels the edge in the scientist's attack, he is accommodating enough to use it for the moment. Here is the basic concession: "ordinary" prose is scientist's prose.

And this notion of what is ordinary in truth or in prose is

[16] *The Limits of Poetry*, p. 95-6.

[17] *The Intent of the Critic*, p. 111. Compare: "the straight ethical consideration would be prose; it would be an act of interested science" (*ibid.*, 103).

[18] *The Limits of Poetry*, p. 20.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrong; and again, philosophy ought to confiscate what has perhaps been wrongly borrowed through philosophy's wrong influence. "Ordinary" language—so far as we can identify such a thing at all—is very different from scientific description. It is full of remarks like "basically, you know, he is an ass" (Compare *Life is a shadow*), "I am getting really fond of her", "we live in unhappy times", and so on, which may or may not employ metaphors and therefore be true only as a metaphorical statement is true (this is a simple point), but which all go definitely beyond "the level at which the scientist takes it" because they all try to record an impresson, to be a vague but full report, to catch the total revelation, the quality of experience. In other words, the mode of utterance in which literature is straightforwardly true is perfectly familiar—more so perhaps than the mode of utterance of science—and nothing can make us in the least hesitate to see literature as capable of one straightforward kind of truth, and not supplanted by science but proceeding along a path divergent from it; nothing, that is, save a theoretical homage to a dominance by the scientific mode that our practice conclusively rejects. Literature, of course, is more highly organized, more animated, more subtle than anything in ordinary speech—sometimes incomparably so—and it both demands a more intent, trained attention, and can penetrate the quality of experience with greater, with even explosive force. But its germ, its monocellular prototype, is one of the familiar modes of ordinary speech.

The other half-notion was that, save in some special sense, literature would on investigation prove useless; and it is not difficult to show that this idea comes in turn from the idea that the normal mode of action is the normal (or rather, one occasional) mode of action of the scientist. The work of literary art, says Mr. Tate (his instance is a tragedy by Racine) "proves nothing; it creates the totality of experience in its quality; *and it has no useful relation to the ordinary forms of action*".[19] These italics are my addition; but it is only when they are added that one notices how two very different points have somehow come, in this sentence, to look like one. The same difficulty shows elsewhere: Shelley's

Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of eternity

[19] *The Limits of Poetry*, p. 113.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(an utterance which it is no part of my purpose to defend) "is an explanation of 'life' that seems laden with portent and high significance, but *as explanation* it necessarily looks towards possible action, and it is there that we know that the statement is meaningless. Practical experimental knowledge can alone fit means to ends".[20] But it is a mistake, to think that the only mode of "explanation" is that which fits means to ends; and it is another, that shows in both these examples, to think that ordinary action draws only on the explanations that do fit means to ends. A mere glance at what actions actually occur outside the laboratory proves this. In fact, it would not perhaps be an exaggeration to assert that every ordinary action of any importance (choosing careers, partners, houses, even books or clothes) is ultimately directed, though perhaps in a most fitful and telescoped way, by whatever glimpse of "the totality of experience in its quality" we may have acquired; and if we have any such glimpse, the chances are that in part it is a residue of the various full reports of samples of it, proffered by what we have read. Indeed, action that owes nothing whatever to such glimpses is not only confined to science, but a non-scientist would suppose that it was confined even more closely—to the subordinate and more mechanical parts of science. But what is the upshot of this deference to a distinctively scientific mode of action? It is that the full claim for literature is not made. And the full scope of criticism is mistakenly disallowed.

All these points add up to the general conclusion that the New Criticism has achieved most when it has given an absolutely single-minded attention to its own subject-matter, and achieved less whenever it has paid any service to disciplines outside itself. If so, the moral is obvious: the New Criticism must be even more ambitious, and even more itself. It is, surely, a moral which no critic can find discouraging.

[20] *The Limits of Poetry*, p. 92-3.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

W. S. MERWIN

East of the Sun and West of the Moon

Say the year is the year of the phoenix.
Ordinary sun and common moon,
Turn as they may, are too mysterious
Unless such as are neither sun nor moon
Assume their masks and orbits and evolve
Neither a solar nor a lunar story
But a tale that might be human. What is a man
That a man may recognize, unless the inhuman
Sun and moon, wearing the masks of a man,
Weave before him such a tale as he
—Finding his own face in the strange story—
Mistakes by metaphor and calls his own,
Smiling, as on a familiar mystery?

The moon was thin as a poor man's daughter
At the end of autumn. A white bear came walking
On a Thursday evening at the end of autumn,
Knocked at a poor man's door in a deep wood,
And, "Charity," when the man came he said,
"And the thin hand of a girl have brought me here.
Winter will come, and the vixen wind," he said,
"And what have you but too many mouths to feed,
Oh what have you but a coat like zither-strings
To ward that fury from your family?
But I though wintry shall be bountiful
Of furs and banquets, coins like summer days,
Grant me but the hand of your youngest daughter."

"By a swooning candle, in my porchless door,
While all I wedded or sired huddle behind me,
The night unceremonious with my hair,
I know I cut a poor figure," the man said;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And I admit that your cajolery
(For opulence was once my setting-on)
Finds me not deaf; but I must ask my daughter.
And no, she says. But come again on Thursday:
She is more beautiful than the story goes,
And a girl who wants a week for her persuading
Merits that slow extravagance," he said.
Further in autumn by a week's persuading
The youngest girl on a white bear went riding.

The moon played in a painted elder tree;
He said, when they had gone a while, "We walk
In a night so white and black, how can you tell
My shoulder from a moon-struck hill, my shadow
From the towering darkness; are you not afraid?"
And, "You are thin and colorful who ride
Alone on a white and monstrous thing; suppose
I rose up savage in a desolate place;
Are you not afraid?" And, "What if I were to wander
Down a black ladder, in a trope of death,
Through seven doors all of black ice, and come
On a land of hyperbole, stiff with extremes;
Would it not make the hair rise on your head?"

The wind with moonlit teeth rippled and sulked
In the paper trees, but three times, "No," she said.
"Oh then hold fast by the hair of my shoulders,"
He said; "Hold fast my hair, my savage hair;
And let your shadow as we go hold fast
The hair of my shadow, and all will be well."
Later than owls, all night, a winter night,
They travelled then, until the screaming wind
Fell behind or dead, till no stars glittered
In the headlong dark; and each step dark and long
As falling in the valley of the blind;
Yet all the while she felt her yellow hair
Hang loose at her shoulders, as though she stood still.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They came before daylight to a stone hill
Steep as a pier-glass, where no shrub grew,
Nor grass rustled, nor breeze stirred before dawn.
When the bear knocked, a door swung wide. Their eyes
Enormous with the dark, a hall they entered
That blazed between mirrors, between pilasters
Of yellow chrysolite; on walls of brass
Cold branches of dead genealogies
Clutched candles and wild torches whence the flames
Rose still as brilliants. Under a fiery
Garnet tree with leaves of glass, sunken
In a pool of sea-green beryl as in still water
A gold salmon hung. And no sound came.

The wall healed behind them. When she turned,
The wall steep as a pier-glass, the door
Vanished like a face in ruffled water,
And they stood dumb in the echoing light
While no flame crackled, no water fell. They passed
Between the rows of burning, between the rings
Of extinct animals that stared from sockets
In the braziered walls; hour upon hour,
Hall upon blazing hall, and came at last
Through obsequious curtains to a closed room
Where she descended; at a beck of his head
A gold table leapt from the air; she dined
That night on lapwing and wine of pomegranates.

The bear had gone. She touched a silver bell.
She stood straightway in a white chamber
By a bed of lapis-lazuli. Red agate
And yellow chrysolite the floors. A white
Carnelian window gave upon cut hills
Of amethyst and yellow serpentine
Pretending summer; when she stood naked there
Her nakedness from the lighted stones
Sprang a thousand times as girl or woman,
Child or staring hag. The lamps went black;
When she lay down to sleep, a young man entered
Who stayed all night in the dark beside her
But was gone before dawn returned to that country.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nightly he came again. Once he said,
"I am the white bear, who once was a man;
In a christian body, in a green kingdom
One time I had dominion. Now I keep
Not so much as the shadow that I had,
And my own shape only by dark; by day
Compelled I am to that pale beast. Let it be
Ensample to your forbearance: here love
Must wander blind or with mistaken eyes,
For dissolution walks among the light
And vision is the sire of vanishing."
What love soever in the dark there were,
Always at daylight she wakened alone.

By day she walked in the espaliered garden
Among pheasants and clear flowers; she said,
"What if these pheasants amble in white glass,
Ducks strut ridiculous in stone, the streams
Slither nowhere in beryl; why should I
Complain of such inflexible content,
Presume to shudder at such serenity,
Who walk in some ancestral fantasy,
Lunar extravagance, or lost pagoda
That dreams of no discipline but indolence?
What shall be rigid but gems and details
While all dimensions dance in the same air?
And what am I if the story be not real?

"But what it is," she said, "to wander in silence,
Though silence be a garden. What shall I say,
How chiselled the tongue soever, and how schooled
In sharp diphthongs and suasive rhetorics,
To the echoless air of this sufficiency?
Where should I find the sovereign aspirate
To rouse in this world a tinkle of syllables?
Or what shall I sing to crystal ears, and where
All songs drop in the air like stones; oh what
Shall I do while the white-tongued flowers shout
Impossible silence on the impossible air
But wander with my hands over my ears?
And what am I if the story be not real?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He says the place is innocent; and yet
I may not see his face; claims he is held
Equivocating between prince and beast
By the ministrations of an evil stepdame,
But such might be mere glittering deviltry.
Here is no nightly moon nor tidal water
But mornings miming at mutability
Where all stands new at noon and nothing fades
Down the perfect amber of the afternoons;
All, simultaneous and unwearied, comes
Guesting again at evening. But a day
Must dwindle before dawn be real again;
And what am I if the story be not real?"

She said at night when he lay beside her,
"Why should I raise the singular dissent
Who delight in an undiminished country
Where all that was or shall be transitory
Stands whole again already? Yet I sigh
For snipes to whir and fall, for hawks to fall,
For one more mortal crimson that will fade,
For one glimpse of the twisted holly tree
Before my mother's door, and the short-lived
Wren by my mother's window, and the tame crane
Walking in shallow water. I would learn
Whether I dreamed then or walk now in a dream,
For what am I if the story be not real?"

Suddenly where no sound had been she heard
A distant lisp and crumble, like a wave,
Like the whisper of tidal water, emulous
Of its own whispers: his echoing heart. "Shall I
Pace an eternity of corridors,
Alone among sad topaz, the reflections
Flickering only on your emptiness,
And the soundlessness be like a sound of mourning,
That seemed a sound of joy? Nevertheless,
Go you shall if you wish; but promise,
Lest a malicious word undo us both,
Never to walk or talk alone," he said,
"With your mother, who is as wise as you."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was a Sunday. Gold on the glass leaves.
She sat in the garden on the white bear's shoulders.
She touched a silver bell, and instantly
Saw the swaying of incorrigible meadows
Ripening, a green wind playful in barley,
The holly, contorted at her mother's door,
The fluttering wren—the brief feathers
Provisional about mortality—
At her mother's window, the tame crane walking
As though not real where the real shallows ran.
She had descended; the bear was gone;
She heard the whistling grass, and the holly leaves
Saying: "Your mother, who is wise as you."

She was greeted like a lost season.
Daylong she walked again in affluent summer,
But one day walked at last aside, and talked
Alone with her mother, who was wise as she.
"Equivocation between prince and beast,
The ministrations of an evil stepdame,
Might be a devilish tale; how could you tell,"
Her mother said, "should it be the devil's self
Or some marvel of ugliness you lay beside?
Take, better than advice, this end of candle
To light when he sleeps next you in the dark;
Only be careful that no drops fall."
The grass might whistle under the holly leaves.

On a day of no clouds he came to fetch her.
It was a Sunday. A soft wind stroking
The fields already white almost to harvest.
"Shall we not ride a while in the mortal air
Before we go," he asked, "for the love of fading?
But wish, when you are weary, for the sound
Of the silver bell, and we shall instantly
Be home again. Did all happen as I said?"
"Yes," she said, "how might it be otherwise?"
"Did you, then, walk aside with your mother?" he asked;
"Did you listen to your mother's advice?"
"Oh no," she said. "Then all may yet be well."
But she wished for the sound of the silver bell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That night when she was sure he slept
She rose in the dark and struck light
To the end of candle, and held it above his face.
What blaze was this, what prince shaming with beauty
The sun peerless at noon? The dazzled stones
Seemed each a blond particular summer wringing
In the one thirst the lion and the nightingale.
The shadows bowed; they fell down amazed.
"And I with my foolish arm upraised . . .
But love so beggars me of continence,
Either I must kiss him or die," she said,
And bent, therewith, and kissed his head. Three times
The tallow folly from the candle fell.

"Oh why must all hope resolve to vanity?"
Waking, he cried; "why could you not entertain
A curious patience but for one whole year,
For then had we been saved, and my spell broken.
Now this kingdom must shatter and I depart
For the wheeling castle of my stepmother
And marry a princess with a nose three ells long,
When I might have married you." "Oh love," she cried,
"May I not learn the way and follow you?"
"There is no way there that a body might follow:
Farther than dreams that palace lies
East of the sun and west of the moon, girt
With rage of stars for sea. There no one comes."

She seemed to sleep, for she woke again
On a usual morning in a different world,
Bright grass blowing, birds loud in the trees;
That precious kingdom, that charmed lover
Gone. She was kneeling under a willow
In her salt tears. When she had called
And cried till she was weary she walked on
Slowly, walked the length of a day, and seemed
None the more weary for all her walking
But travelled, it seemed, in a landscape of exceptions
Where no evening came but a shadowy
Skeptical bird who settled in a tree
And sang, "All magic is but metaphor."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Under a crag, when it should have been evening,
Where there should have been shadows, by an apple tree,
She saw a hag who laughed to herself and tossed
A golden apple. "Good day, hag," she said.
"Can you tell me how I might find the castle
That lies east of the sun and west of the moon?"
"Whoever comes and calls me hag, haggard
May she sit also, unless it be the lady
Who should marry the prince there. Are you she?
Yes, she says. Yet the way I cannot tell.
Take, rather, this gold apple, mount this horse
To ride to ask my sister, and once there,
Tap him behind the left ear; he will come home."

Long she rode as the patience of stones
And saw again, when it should have been evening,
A hag who played with a golden carding-comb.
"If withering were a signature of wisdom,
I were a miracle of sagacity,"
She said, "my brow invisible with laurel,
But I am bare parchment where a word might be,
And any road that might lead to that castle
Is a thing I never knew. All I can offer
By way of blessing is this gold carding-comb.
But you might ask my sister; take my own horse.
When he has brought you where she sits, tap him
Behind the left ear; he will come home again."

The third hag said, "I have been young as you,
And shall be so again, unless the stars
Tell lies in the shifty dark, but whether
More pleasure is to be young and pass for fair
Or to be haggard and seem knowledgeable,
I am too wise to choose, and yet the way
That castle lies is a thing I never knew;
But there you will come, late or never. I give you,
Besides that wisdom, this golden spinning-wheel,
And if you wish, you may ride my own horse
To ask the East Wind. When you are there,
Tap the beast once behind the left ear,
And he will be off and come to me again."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oh then she rode such waste of calendars
She should have found the end of weariness
But came instead to the house of the East Wind.
"Oh Wind," she called, "which way would you blow,
Which way might I follow to come to the castle
That lies east of the sun and west of the moon?"
"I, bold of wing beyond the glimpse of morning,
Have found the dark where no birds sleep,
Have shivered and returned, have many times
Heard of that castle, but never blown so far
Nor learned the way. But I have a brother," he said,
"An infinite voyager: be pleased to sit
Between my shoulders and I shall take you there."

Though faster then than summoned ghosts they flew,
Long was that journey as the wisdom of owls
Before they came to the roof of the West Wind.
"For all I am prodigious of voyages,
Whistle heyday and holiday, make light
Of the poor limbs of summer and have sailed
Beyond the hueless sighing of drowned days
Into the dark where no shades sigh,
Have shuddered and come home a different way,
Unholy be the whisper of my name
If ever I were a wind about that tower
Or knew the way; but come with me," he said:
"I have a brother who has blown further than I."

"I might shriek till the world was small
As a turtle's egg; I have whipped my savagery
A pride of days beyond where the world ends
In burning, into the dark where no flames twitch,
Have blessed myself and hastily blown elsewhere,
But never glimpsed wrack nor wisp of that castle,
And whether there be any such place at all
I gravely doubt; but I have a brother
Wields the gale that flaps the chittering dead
Beyond where the world ends in ice; be sure
Unless his storm can shiver your conundrum
It is a thing unknown." The South Wind's wings
Howled, till they came to the door of the North Wind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh once," he roared, "I blew an aspen leaf
Beyond the glimmering world, over
The glass eaves of time, into that dark
Where no ice gleams; there, bristling, found that other
Wind of fear, but a rage stayed me until
The star-lashed sea, until I found the castle
That lies east of the sun and west of the moon.
But never I told a soul, for there I lay
Three weeks, frail as the aspen leaf, on the wild
Shore before I dared blow home again.
But if you be the lady that you claim,
Stay while I rest tonight and I shall try
Tomorrow if I can fly so far again."

Who has outflown the nightmare? Yet fast
Almost as she they flew in the morning
Beyond all boreal flickerings, headlong
Over the glass eaves of time and found
The breathless dark where no souls stir,
But hair in another wind; broke, almost blind,
At last over a mad famished sea;
Then long as the vows of love they whirled.
But he wearied. The waves snapped at his knees,
The dog-toothed waves, till he whispered, "My wings fail,"
Sinking. But she cried, "I see a white shore,
A shadowy pinnacle that may be the castle
That lies east of the sun and west of the moon."

What if the breakers gulped and craved his thighs?
Where he had set her on the white shore
He fell forward and slept. Already
A foot beyond the frustrate sea there drowsed
Silence of forest, indolent, rimmed
With flutter of birches like birds in the tender
Sun, with thirsty osiers, pale hawthorn,
Perpetual apple trees, the capricious-limbed.
She saw in that light how the castle vanished
Above fancy among faithful clouds,
Saw the door, but nowhere near the door she went,
But sat under a guelder rose and sang
"Ah, well-a-day," and played with the gold apple.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Till from an upper window of the castle
A princess with a nose three ells long
Called, "Who are you, singing 'well-a-day'
Under my window; and oh what will you take
And give me that golden apple?" "I am a lady
Of foreign ways singing to my own hair
A dirge for diminishing, under a pale tree,
Am a hazard waif blown from the scapegrace sea,
Am an aspen leaf; but nothing you own
Will I exchange for this gold apple,
Unless it should be that I might sleep tonight
Alone all night in his room with the prince
Who lives in this castle." And that could be arranged.

But she was returned, for earnest of gold,
Only a sleeping body and a sleep:
When she was led at evening into his room
Already he lay sleeping; for all she cried
His name aloud, for all she cried and kissed
His face and forehead, all night he lay sleeping.
What might she be but chorus to a dream,
But one who strokes a dream of chrysolite,
Glass pheasants, ducks ridiculous in stone,
A gold salmon in a beryl pool,
As reliquary, as meager communicance
Till daylight; then departs and sits again
By the tower and plays with the gold carding-comb?

"Nothing whatever will I take," she said
When the princess called, "for my gold carding-comb,
But to sleep tonight by the same prince."
But where was the unrecking fantasy,
The concord of distraught belief
She had named for love and understood by love,
If when she lay, and the second time, beside him
Nothing would answer to her kiss but sleep?
Must she before she wake still find a dream
Wherein she lay beside him, and he, waking,
Dreamed still of her? Although beside him, dream
Of yet more fortunate wakenings; till daylight;
Then sing by a gold spinning wheel, dreaming?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I am a thirsty lady wishing I walked
Beside no water but a pool of beryl;
I sing to drown the silence of far flowers
And though I am deaf to all sounds other
Than a deafening heart in a distant room, I dream
I wander with my hands over my ears."
She argued with the princess as yesterday,
Parted with the gold spinning-wheel. Oh must
Love's many mansions, the patient honeycomb
Of hope unlearn their heavens and at a sleep
Triply be consigned to cerements,
Or must salvation shrink to the unlikely
Monstrance of another's wakening?

Suppose the requisite vigil. Say one lay
Two nights awake beside the prince's room,
Heard crying there, as toward a vanishing specter,
Told the prince, and he, thus wise against potions,
The third night, sleepless, with wide arms received her,
Calling, "Oh love, is blessedness a risk
So delicate in time, that it should be
Tonight you find me? Tomorrow, always tomorrow
It is that my step-mother was to prevail,
It is that I was to marry that other princess.
But we are the sense of dawn beneath pretense
Of an order of darkness. Now lie in wisdom, mindful
Only of love, and leave to me tomorrow."

In the morning, to proud stepdame and coy princess,
"Call me a wry intransigent, a glass
Of fickle weathers, but what care I," he said,
"For decorum, though it be my wedding-day?
Shall I be yoked to an unproven woman?
But who she may be can wash this shirt of mine,
Stained with three drops of tallow, white again
As once it was, she and no other lady
Will I marry. All wet the hands who wish;
All beat the board; all wring the linen; all wash
In the one water." Howsoever the princess
Dipped and wrung, the stains ran gray; or stepdame
Scrubbed, the shirt grew black as knavery.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"There is a girl outside the castle door,"
One said who loitered there and watched; "perhaps
She if she tried might wash it white again."
But vexed stepdame and angry princess
Raged then and screamed, "No, no! Shall we have a tattered
Waif with outlandish ways for rival, and we
With our royal hands in water?" Yet the prince
Answered, "Let her come in, whoever she be."
She dipped the linen and once drew it forth
White as a leper; drew it forth again
White as blown snow; a third time raised it
Spotless, white as the violent moon; she said,
"How should I not, since all pallor is mine."

The moon was musing in her high chamber
Among nine thousand mirrors. "Oh what am I,"
She cried, "but a trick of light, and tropically?
I walk in a wild charactry of night,
In a game of darkness figurative with tapers,
Toying with apples, and come upon myself
More often than is meet for sanity.
Oh who would be shown, save in analogy,
—What for gold handsels and marvellous equerry—
As three hags sitting under an apple tree?
But I walk multifarious among
My baubles and horses; unless I go in a mask
How shall I know myself among my faces?"

"All metaphor," she said, "is magic. Let
Me be diverted in a turning lantern,
Let me in that variety be real.
But let the story be an improvisation
Continually, and through all repetition
Differ a little from itself, as though
Mistaken; and I a lady with foreign ways
To sing therein to my own hair." To the sun,
"You who tomorrow are my pentecost,
Come dance with me—oh but be white, be wintry;
Oh lest I fall an utter prey to mirrors,
Be a white bear," she said, "and come a-walking,
And ask my hand. I am a peasant's daughter."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is it for nothing that a troupe of days
Makes repeated and perpetual rummage
In the lavish vestry; or should sun and moon,
Finding mortality too mysterious
Naked and with no guise but its own,
—Unless one of immortal gesture come
And by a mask should show it probable—
Believe a man, but not believe his story?
Say the year is the year of the phoenix.
Now, even now, over the rock hill
The tropical, the lucid moon, turning
Her mortal guises in the eye of a man,
Creates the image in which the world is.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILDER BENTLEY

A Landscape of the Seasons

[The seasons are those of a poet-painter's life, unfolding vertically to reveal *Spring Sunrise near Brentwood Bridge on Middle River* in the foreground, *Midsummer Whirlwinds on Bacon Island* in the middle ground, *Three Old Windmills in the Cañada de los Poblanos, Early Fall* in the background, with *Mount Diablo in Midwinter from White Oak Pavilion* crowning the landscape like the mist-laden *T'ai* of some ancient Chinese scroll.]

Spring Sunrise near Brentwood Bridge on Middle River:

In the ambient emptiness I seem to recall a landscape by the Master Ma Pi
Of distant mountains, and an ancient willow by the bank of a stream.

A squadron of great white cranes rises from the darkness of flooded peatlands,
And soars in golden echelon toward the Sierra Nevada.—
I wonder how soon the voices of ten thousand nesting birds
Will drown out the quavering tune of this broken reed?

Midsummer Whirlwinds on Bacon Island:

Asperges me!—for what mortal soul now lives without praise or blame?—
This roaring uncaged dust, convolving, silences the cicada's cadences,
Scattering peons, asparagus, and me.

Near the Gehenna of Soissons I remember an old stonecutter
Who would pause periodically during the sawing of the *craie*,
Peer dolefully upward through a stormy summer's armistice,
And shout, miming with ambidextrous violence a shell's trajectory:

"Ci gît une famille . . . boum! . . . et c'est fini!"—
Then, sighing, he'd look with Ezekiel across a valley of dry bones.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three Old Windmills in the Cañada de los Poblanos, Early Fall:

Only sensitive to the poetry of Ninth Month,
Or to Beethoven's *Nonus*, yet unborn,
What would the venerable Van Rijn have conjured here
In etcher's ink or pen-and-bistre?—
Three stark steel tripods, capped by weathered vanes and rusty battered blades—
Three scrap-iron skeletons, shorn of rustic clothing—
Sans thatched hats or doughty whirling white-sailed arms
Such as proved Quixote's mettle, jousting?

Would he delineate this taut Pythagorean triad sheer,
Against fall thunderheads and distant squalls
Now darkening the drought-gray islands and contributaries
Where the Cañada debouches on the San Joaquin?—
Or like his Californian counterpart, Will Keith,
Take flight from tripods and treeless horizons?—
Go paint instead some murky vale in ultima Thule,
Where moss-infested oaks perpetuate the umbers, terres-vertes, and penumbras?

Mount Diablo in Midwinter from White Oak Pavilion:

At the foot of noble North Peak wet snow weighs down young boughs
With a thousandfold more cares than those of fifty-one brief winters.—
Far below, at the foot of the talus, the white oaks are leafless.—
On Marsh Creek Pass no hoar frost lingers, only yesterday's bitter mist.

Ingrate, why should your heart weigh heavier than a mountain's,
Now that you've taken to the darkening homeward road?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lines Written to a Friend

Who Found No Suitable Composition While Scanning the Horizon from the Summit of Cloud's Rest.

No clearer vision than through a mountain mist,
No surer stance than during a mountain storm,
No steadier strokes than those from a mountaineer's frost-bitten
hand!

Then perish the mortmain mind!—
Completing the grand cirque,
Counter-clockwise—*coq-d'or*-wise,
Compass three hundred sixty scrolls!

As the North Dragon's great talons
Relinquish the scabrous flanks of North Dome,
The Master Obata studies young pine needles
Impaling freshly fallen snow.—
Could he, like the sage Wang Wei, recapture,
With black incense on moonstone silk,
The music of that ice-fanged waterfall?

The Master now meditates beneath Junipero's Ancient Elbow.—
Shall I answer his summons, in lieu of your shadow,
Grinding and blending water and ink?

Verses to Accompany Two Drawings

(*For the Solitary Wildgoose of Anhwei*)

Still Life with Persimmons:

In the pure white space of *Yin,*
To give free rein to the Lo-yang stallion's bristles:
Is this not happiness?

For every effortless engagement,
To make ten thousand *corrections de savoir-faire:*
Is this not courage?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Fishermen Drying Lines near the Estero de Limantour

by

WILDER BENTLEY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

From seven thousand sorties and forays on paper or silk,
To salvage only seven lean *kakemonos* from the cleansing pyre:
Are not these the withered fruits of the *querela Pacis?*

Landscape with Waterfowl:

A wharfinger heron stands,
Marking well the mist rising from your marshes;
While three mud hens nuzzle your laden quays
And ferry your *enjambements*
From furrow to flooded furrow.

More goslings than cygnets *ora li vedi?*

This very day, O Solitary Wildgoose,
A galleonade of wild white swans
Found refuge on the sloughs off Mandeville Island—
Only an hour's flight eastward from the Estero de Limantour,
Yet how many wing beats from *The Golden Hind!*

Tule Fog

Salt pungencies purge!—
Where *sfumato* spells *nōtan,*
A serpentine mist
Glides over the Suisun
To glaze a fisherman's line.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEODORE ROETHKE

Song for the Squeeze Box

It wasn't Ernest; it wasn't Scott,
The boys I knew when I went to pot,—
They didn't boast; they didn't snivel,
But stepped right up and swung at the Devil;
And after exchanging a punch or two,
They all sat down like me and you
—And began to drink up the money.

It wasn't the Colony; it wasn't the Stork;
It wasn't the joints in New York, New York;
But me and a girl friend learned a lot
In Ecorse, Toledo, and Wyandotte
—About getting rid of our money.

A place I surely did like to go
Was the underbelly of Cicero;
And East Saint Louis and Monongahela
Had the red-hot spots where you could feel a
—Lot like losing some money.

It was jump-in-the-hedge; it was wait-in-the-hall;
It was "Would you believe it—*fawther's* tall!"
(It turned out she hadn't a father at all)
—But how she could burn up the money!

Oh, the Synco Septet played for us then,
And even the boys turned out to be men
As we sat there drinking that bath-tub gin
—And loosened up with our money.

It was Agnes and Mabel and Becky and Lou,
And a girl that lived in Big Rapids too,
And none of them had very much to do
—Excepting eat up my money.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was Samoots Matuna and Bugs Moran;
It was Fade me another and Stick out your can;
It was Place and Show and Also Ran
—For you never won with that money.

Oh, it wasn't a crime, it wasn't a sin,
And nobody slipped me a Mickey Finn,
For whenever I could I dealt them all in
—On that chunk of Grandpa's money.

It was Dead Man's Corner, it was Kelly's Stable;
It was Stand on your feet as long as you're able,
But many a man rolled under the table
—When he tried to drink up my money.

To some it may seem a sad thing to relate,
The dough I spent on Chippewa Kate,
For she finally left town on the Bay City freight
—When she thought I'd run out of money.

The doctors, the lawyers, the cops are all paid,—
So I've got to get me a rich ugly old maid
Who isn't unwilling, who isn't afraid
—To help me eat up her money.

The Wraith

Incomprehensible gaiety and dread
Attended what we did. Behind, before,
Lay all the lonely pastures of the dead;
The spirit and the flesh cried out for more.
We two, together, on a darkening day
Took arms against our own obscurity.

Did each become the other in that play?
She laughed me out, and then she laughed me in;
In the deep middle of ourselves we lay;
When glory failed, we danced upon a pin.
The valley rocked beneath the granite hill;
Our souls looked forth, and the great day stood still.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was a body, and it cast a spell,—
God pity those but wanton to the knees,—
The flesh can make the spirit visible;
We woke to find the moonlight on our toes.
In the rich weather of a dappled wood
We played with dark and light as children should.

What shape leaped forward at the sensual cry?—
Sea-beast or bird flung toward the ravaged shore?
Did space shake off an angel with a sigh?
We rose to meet the moon, and saw no more.
It was and was not she, a shape alone,
Impaled on light, and whirling slowly down.

Dinky

O what's the weather in a Beard?
It's windy there, and rather weird,
And when you think the sky has cleared
—Why, there is Dirty Dinky.

Suppose you walk out in a storm
With nothing on to keep you warm,
And then step barefoot on a Worm
—Of *course*, it's Dirty Dinky.

As I was crossing a hot hot plain,
I saw a sight that caused me pain:
You asked me before: I'll tell again
—It *looked* like Dirty Dinky.

Last night you lay asleeping? No!
The room was thirty-five below,
The sheets and blankets turned to snow
—He'd got in: Dirty Dinky.

You'd better watch the things you do,
You'd better watch the things you do—
You're part of him, he's part of you,
—*You* may be Dirty Dinky!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT GRAVES

The Devil at Berry Pomeroy

Snow and fog unseasonable,
The cold remarkable,
Children sickly;
Green fruit lay thickly
Under the crabtree
And the wild cherry.
I heard witches call
Their imps to the Hall:
"Hey, Ilemauzar,
Sack-and-Sugar,
Peck in the Crown,
Come down, come down!"
I heard bells toll
For a monster's soul
That was born, not dead,
Without eyes in his head;
I saw phantoms leap
From the high Keep;
I saw blows thwack
On the raw back
Of a dying ass.
Blight was on the grass,
Poison in the cup
(Lover, drink up!),
With envy, slander,
Weasels a-wander,
Incest done
Between mother and son,
Murder of hags
For their money-bags,
Wrath, rape,
And the shadowy ape
Which a lady, weeping,
Leads by a string
From first twilight

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Until past midnight
Through the Castle yard—
"Blow winds, blow hard!"
So the Devil snaps his chain
And renews his reign
To the little joy
Of Berry Pomeroy.

Hippopotamus' Address to the Freudians

[He quotes Plutarch's *Of Isis and Osiris* 32, pleading for the revision of the misnomer "Oedipus Complex", which should be "Hippopotamus Complex". His own acts, unlike those of the Theban King Oedipus, were not committed in error, he asserts, but prompted by a genuine infantile libido.]

Deep in Nile mire,
  Jamqu' etiam:
"I slew my sire,
  I forced my dam.
Plutarch's *Of Isis*
Dwells on my vices,
  Shameless I am:
Free from repression
Or urge to confession,
  Freud's little lamb.
I slew my sire,
In frantic desire,
  I forced my dam—
I and not Oedipus,"
Roars Hippopotamus,
"You have confounded us
  Jamqu' etiam!"

The Portrait

She speaks always in her own voice
Even to strangers; but those other women
Exercise their borrowed, or false, voices
Even on sons and daughters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She can walk invisibly at noon
Along the high road; but those other women
Gleam phosphorescent—broad hips and gross fingers—
Down every lampless alley.

She is wild and innocent, pledged to love
Through all disaster; but those other women
Decry her for a witch or a common drab
And glare back when she greets them.

Here is her portrait, gazing sidelong at me,
The hair in disarray, the young eyes pleading:
"And you, love? As unlike those other men
As I those other women?"

Twin to Twin

Come, ancient rival, royal weird,
Who each new May must grip my beard
Till circling time shall cease to be:
Ground your red lance and mourn with me,
Though it were briefly—

Mourn that our wild-flower-breasted Fate,
Who locked us in this pact of hate,
Cuckolds us both as here we stand
And with unmagic mars the strand
Of her own island.

Yet, once again, your heart being true,
Our interrupted strife renew:
Reach for my beard with heaving breast
To roar: "You lie! She loved me best,"
And fight your fiercest.

Leaving the Rest Unsaid

Finis, apparent on an earlier page,
With fallen obelisk for colophon,
Must this be here repeated?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Death has been ruefully announced
And to die once is death enough,
Be sure, for any life-time.

Must the book end, as you would end it,
With testamentary appendices
And graveyard indices?

But no, I will not lay me down
To let your tearful music mar
The decent mystery of my progress.

So now, my solemn ones, leaving the rest unsaid,
Rising in air as on a gander's wings
At a careless comma,

DONALD A. STAUFFER

The Mouse in the Macaroon

"A suit for $5,000 damages was filed in Denver district court Thursday against a Denver bakery by a woman who charged that she bit into a macaroon the company produced and found it contained a mouse."—*The Denver Post.*

It was a Wednesday afternoon
While I was sitting in my house.
I bit into a macaroon
And in the wafer found a mouse.

My gustatory expectation
Was roused for cloying sweetmeats potent.
Imagine my exacerbation
To find instead a housemouse rodent!

Though he were made into a mousse
Mus musculus is never nice;
Or macerated in their juice,
No chef can make me fond of mice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I wish to make a formal charge:
I did not like the taste at all.
The macaroon, though hardly large,
Contained a mouse that was not small.

Cockroaches may be found in prunes.
Lump sugar may contain a louse.
I do not claim all macaroons
Invariably contain a mouse.

I do not charge the bakery
With malice that had been prepense;
Yet it must heal the shock for me
In dollars of this realm, and cents.

Hence in redress I must be stern.
I think five thousand should suffice.
This way alone will bakers learn
A cookie is no place for mice.

The powerful dream of pelf may yet
Dispel, I trust, my nightmare soon.
But only thus will I forget
The mouse within the macaroon.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RICHARD CLAY

A Beautiful Night for Orion

As DIANA SCHUYLER HUNCHED HERSELF in the corner of the front seat she saw the windshield wiper sweeping the snow from the dark glass with a whick-whack sound that seemed to her as cruel and persistent as if it were slapping her tear stained cheeks from side to side.

"Worst storm this winter" said Harvey, and she started at the sound of his grating voice. "I'm sorry you were tired of the party, Diana, but maybe it's a good thing we left so early. This blizzard's going to make the driving pretty tough in a few more hours. I'll be glad to get home before the roads are blocked."

"Don't just make conversation, please. I've asked you before."

There was a short silence that seemed to her a blessing until she heard and almost felt the terrible clanking of those chains and until he started up again like an alarm that won't shut off.

"I hope you're not brooding some more. That's one of your bad points you'll have to get over, Diana. You're making a mountain out of a molehill."

"Shut up, please."

"Okay, if that's the way you feel. But I think you're acting very nervous. I hope it's not about the storm, because we'll get through okay. You can count on that. I always do get through, don't I?"

She felt the bitter draft around the door of the business coupe and tightend the leopard coat around her waist.

"Don't I?" he asked.

She noticed over the grinding of the chains that the door was rattling, and a sudden picture came to her mind of the door flying open and her falling out under those horrible chains.

"Don't I," he said.

She slid herself carefully away from the door but not so far that there was any danger of touching him. Then she grasped the cold door handle in her bare hands and pulled it, straining until something sharp happened, and she felt herself falling back against him so that the car lurched and threw her the other way again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"My God, Diana. What the devil are you trying to do!"

"It came off," she cried, staring at the object in her hands. "It came off. Your damned door handle." She threw it on the seat between them, and it bounced to the floor.

"OwOO—," he reached down, and the car lurched again. "Did you throw that at me? Did you deliberately throw that at me, Diana?"

"Throw it?—deliberately throw? Oh—," and then that seemed to her to be absolutely too much, and she felt the laughter coming up and the tears running down her cheeks again silently but openly with laughter so she could snap open her gold kidskin bag and fumble in it and find the laced edged hankie and mop her eyes this time.

"You and your wonderful car," she said. "What a team. Driving me home. Getting me through."

"With no help from you."

"That's enough of that sort of talk, Harvey Trimmer. We've had just about enough of it tonight. Now listen. This door is dangerous. Stop the car and close it right now."

"I can't understand it," he complained. "It's a brand new car."

"I don't care how new it is. The door has to be fixed at once."

"I just bought it three weeks ago. You know that."

"Of course I know it. What are you telling me that for? What on earth has—oh you're being stubborn, are you?" There was a pause as she heard the door rattling, and she went on. "But I mean it, Harvey. It frightens me. Won't you please stop and fix it."

"Be glad to," he said briskly.

She felt the car swing off the road and watched him get right out in his galoshes. He left the motor idling. She could hear it very soft and hear the windshield wiper ticking like a friendly little metronome in a small room and see the green lights on the dash and the broad white beam out front pouring light through the swirls of snow and see the two—what were they out front?—like jack o'lanterns—what could they be?—oh my, oh MY, it was her gate, her gate posts, her very own place, her home. They were home. It was the carved lion gate posts and the wrought iron lights from grandfather's time. How wonderful they looked, how priceless in the snow like two santa clauses with their caps of snow and their lighted faces and their beards of snow. She would have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to tell him that. And the little evergreens that were planted last spring were standing like waiters with their arms full of snow dumplings. She would have to tell him that—or could she? Could she ever hope to make—

He opened her door suddenly. "Watch out," he said, and slammed it.

And then, thinking irrationally that Harvey was doing it in anger although she knew better at once, she felt herself and the car being jerked forward helplessly, so that her head snapped back against the seat as she heard the metallic clash slightly muffled by the snow and realized that the car had been hit from behind quite hard.

After that she heard Harvey shouting several times in his bossy voice and heard a door slam and another close less violently. As she scrambled up on her knees to look out the back window she saw the big dim moons of the lights of the other car behind them shining close as if to embrace their spare tire, although the lights did not seem to be tilted or the glass broken or damaged in any way. She saw the three black shapes in the reflected light to one side of the fender, dark and rather grim at first in the driving snow, until it parted in an eddy and showed them huddled in a circle, one of them obviously Harvey in his top hat, and the other two strangers, one of the two small, not much bigger than she was, and the other even bigger than Harvey. The big man seemed to bend over the other two as if to protect them in a fatherly way, so that she was surprised when the match light flared in his face and showed him to be so young, no older than Parmalee. The yellow light flickered on the soft curve of his cheek and the straight shadowed line of his nose and a curling lock of his hair that had strayed over a corner of his forehead because he wore no hat. The match glow was passed in cupped hands to the small man, who leaned towards the light so she could see that his face was wizened like a monkey and full of wrinkles like Daddy's face only younger, more like—"Oh, my goodness," she said aloud, "it *is* Parmalee."

She twisted around and leaned hard on the horn button, hearing the rich trumpet sound as she pushed it one—two—three—four times in her excitement. When she turned again to the rear window the three dark figures were facing her with their mouths open like a Christmas tableau of carolers in the snow about to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sing a sacred song, except that the presence of Harvey's top hat cast a ribald doubt on their purpose, as if they might start with "We Three Kings" and suddenly shift to "The Whiffenpoof Song". She felt a sudden shivering from the cold and from a sense of merriment that was intense, private, and as clear to her as the stroke of a bell.

Harvey detached himself and disappeared from sight by the corner of the window a second before he opened her door, leaning in, bringing stray flakes of snow whirling around his shoulders.

"It's some crazy college boys," he announced. "They're probably drunk. They skidded into us, but they only dented the tire cover. Look, they gave me twenty dollars to fix it." He showed her the bill in his fist triumphantly as if it was retribution exacted for the wildness of young men and perhaps for door handles that came off.

"It's Parmalee. Isn't it Parmalee?" She pushed at his chest.

"Parmalee? Your brother? I've never met—"

"Well, get out of my way." She squirmed around on the seat and threw her legs over the side and out the door, grateful for the fur lined boots as her feet touched the snow. "Puff," she called. "Puff, it's me."

The small dark figure dropped the red streak of his cigarette in the snow and came hurrying towards her.

"Danny? Is that you, Danny?" And then she knew it was her brother by the name given her and by the squeaky voice. As he embraced her she heard him murmuring in her ear, and she felt his wiry arms around her coat while her eyes watched over his shoulder as his tall companion ambled towards them until he was close enough so she could see his smile and the way he brushed the snow flakes off his hair. Then she turned her eyes away from him and kissed Parmalee quickly on his wrinkled cheek and said gayly, "It's gorgeous fun to have you home again, Puff."

She backed away from him, holding his arms as if to look him over, feeling almost as if she was acting again in one of those plays at school. "What on earth do you do with yourself these days?" she asked. "You never come home for weekends any more."

"We've had to work like the devil. This year's much tougher than last."

"Is it? I suppose that's why you never bring that fabulous room-mate of yours to Philadelphia." She sighed and cocked her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

head, letting her eyes glance quickly beyond his shoulder and back to him again.

"We're here now," Parmalee said mockingly. He turned his head and spoke away from her so that she was forced to look at the tall man standing just behind him. "Sis, this is my room-mate, Harold Stroud. He's staying with us for a few days. Harold, this is my sister, Diana."

She was prepared to shake hands graciously, as she had always been taught, and perhaps with some extra warmth because he seemed almost a relative, being her only brother's most admired friend at Princeton. She was even prepared to take both his hands in open welcome because she knew that Harvey was scowling and watching over her jealously and possessively. But she was not at all prepared for him when he stepped toward her and put his arms around her impulsively and hugged her like a bear crushing her to his chest, kissing her warmly on both cheeks and speaking into her ear with a low pleasant voice.

"Greetings, Diana," he said in such a friendly way. "I feel I already know you awfully well from what Jocko has told me. But I didn't know you would use words like fabulous. It sounds like a New York word. Where does it come from?" He held her tight, and she noticed that his arms were under her coat and around her bare back, which was not unpleasant except that she felt trapped for a moment until she remembered that he was almost in the family, and was very nice besides.

She reached up on her tip-toes and kissed him on his cheeks, first on one cheek and then on the other. "I'm so glad you've come to visit," she whispered. "You're just in time for my party tomorrow."

"Am I?" he asked. "Fine. But I should warn you that I don't talk to people who use words like fabulous about me. I give them a look of disbelief and bite their ears off. I never go to their parties. Never."

"Oh," she said, "they're the only ears I have, after all."

And then he laughed, and she laughed, although it seemed to her that neither of them knew quite why.

He let her go suddenly, as if remembering that the others were there watching. She introduced Harvey to him and to Parmalee with a sinking sensation of guilt that everything she had done was wrong. The knowledge of Harvey's disapproval filled her with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trepidation about even such a lovely simple harmless thing as kissing someone new and nice on the cheeks. On the cheeks, and that was all. She felt nothing for him. He was just a friend of her brother's; a big, amiable guy who had kissed her because he saw Parmalee do it and thought it was the right thing. And if that didn't quite ring true the only other answer was that he liked her for some reason, perhaps from the photographs that Parmalee had, or perhaps from something else like the tone of her voice or something she had said, so that he responded to her mood at once before she even knew what it was herself, since she only knew that she had a merry feeling at the sight of them like carolers and at the absurd picture of the Santa Claus gateposts and the evergreen waiters in the snow. She had been frightened until then, frightened of the storm and the chains and the door handle coming off and of the fight with Harvey at the Thorntons' party, frightened of something that Harvey came from, some kind of living that made demands which she grew weary of meeting simply because there was no pleasure in them and because she couldn't be herself, couldn't be at home in that world, no matter how she tried. Now she realized that what she felt was not a sense of guilt at all but a sweet sense of relief because she had decided to break off with Harvey and take her chances in spite of the way that everyone would be shocked and in spite of not being in love when she had always been in love as long as she could possibly remember. Always in love. To be not in love would present a new sensation, but perhaps she needed it. And Harold, a complete stranger, had noticed everything at once in a flash; Harvey's top hat, the early hour to be coming home, and her forced mood, and had been able to put it all together instantly and understand more about her than she had known about herself until he came along with his fresh and rough and friendly bear hug.

Harvey closed her door and got in his side without a word. As the car entered the gate and began the long climb up her driveway she could see the green light from the dash reflected on his scowling face, making it look unhealthy and unhappy. She turned her eyes away towards the falling snow which had practically stopped now in spite of all his talk about several more hours of it. There was a glow, a pale darkness over the countryside, as the snow thinned out. This pale reflected light seemed to cling to her in a private way that made her feel more enclosed and more removed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than when she had been sitting in the little closed-in room of the car with the thick snow all around. She sighed and relaxed in the seat and listened without concern to the pleasant muffled chewing of the chains in the snow.

"I'm sorry about it all," she offered. "It hasn't been your night."

"Is that my fault?" Harvey asked acidly, so that she was happy that he hadn't decided to be contrite just yet.

"I'm not talking about whose fault anything is," she said impatiently. "I'm talking about all the little things I've done, and all the big things you've done. In a way, I'm sorry for both of us that it hasn't worked out."

"Are you apologizing, Diana?"

"*Apologizing,*" she cried. "What an incredible word to use."

"It's a good word."

She shrugged her shoulders, feeling the silk straps of her evening dress move over her skin. "I'm telling you it's all over, Harvey. There's been something wrong with us for weeks. You've known it too. Let's be civilized about it."

"You're being emotional and nervous because you're tired, Diana. You know perfectly well that there's nothing important wrong with us. Ask your mother and father." He spoke with a smug assurance that made her wince because she could remember how long she had admired it and found shelter under it.

"They don't always know what's best for me," she replied, admitting their authority and denying it in the same breath.

"You don't know what you want, Diana," he said with a labored patience. "You think you want excitement and some kind of Hollywood romance full of bogus emotions."

"Oh, don't be so stuffy."

"Well, it's true."

"Harvey, I've asked you before. Please save all that for your insurance prospects. I think it's indecent."

"Indecent! I'd like to know what's indecent about being sensible," he demanded. "I'd like to know what right you have to call me indecent."

"Yes, you are. You're positively indecent. You're cold blooded and selfish and insensitive about other people except on the surface. Like that time you boasted to me about selling more insurance than your father, even though it was his company."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What in hell is wrong with that? He's a semi-invalid from the war. He should have retired long ago, and he admits it himself. Hell, he's proud of me."

"Oh, of course. I'm sure he's proud of you. So why talk about it?—even if you did outsell him. Why talk about it to me, even to me? What good does it do you? What makes you need to take things from other people?"

"I don't. That's a lie."

"You do—do—DO. What about that twenty dollars you took from Parmalee for a silly little dent that won't cost you five dollars to fix?"

"I didn't take it from your brother, damn it. That other fellow, what's his name, was driving. He offered it to me. I didn't ask for it. I guess he was damned glad to get off so cheap, when I could have taken him into court."

"Oh, how vile, how indecent. All this talk about courts—"

"Diana, stop it. You don't know what the word decency means. I suppose, for the Lord's sake, I suppose you thought you were decent when you and that what's his name were hugging and kissing like a couple of moonstruck kids. You never saw him before, did you? What kind of behavior is that? Is that being decent?"

She looked away from him out of the window, lacing her fingers together in her lap and clenching them until she could feel her arms tremble. The pale snow-reflecting darkness heightened her isolation so that she felt for a moment that she might be two people, one of them far above in the night looking down on the other acting out this pitiful comedy like a tiny doll in a toy car way below.

"You know, Harvey," she said bitterly, "you have the most extraordinary ability to smudge even the nicest things."

Nothing further was said as they drove around the left turn by the garage and up the last rise to the house looming above them like a stone fortress with the terrace lights left on for her. When the car reached the steps and stopped there she said wryly, "You'll have to let me out, you know."

"Sorry. I forgot about the handle." He jumped out and came around quickly to open her door. She stepped down, refusing his arm as they walked up the steps together. She found her key easily and put it in the lock, setting the door on the latch as she opened it, so the others could get in.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You go on now," she said.

He stood there. Finally he said, "I'm sorry about tonight."

"Of course you are. So am I. You go on now."

"I'll see you tomorrow night at your party, okay?"

"That's the way it's planned."

"Okay. I'll see you tomorrow night then."

"I suppose so."

As he left her she paused with her hand on the front door to watch him turn the car around and head it down the hill towards the garage, his strong white lights shining on the tire tracks that had been made coming up the drive and that looked like necklaces twined together and laid on a linen cover ahead of his lights, until the dark bulk of his car came between her and the tracks so that she could only see the white lights beyond the car through the rear window which grew smaller every minute as the red light blinked on and off with his braking the car around the sharp curve at the garage and heading it down beyond the trees, the white lights appearing between the trees like a flashing signal growing more distant as it flickered through the thick stand of hemlocks and among the bare branches of elms and chestnuts, all spidery in the faraway light.

She was holding her skirt up clear of the snow as she stood on her threshold and watched him go away from her and watched the dim light of Harold's car climbing the hill so slowly. And now a cold wind came up on the hilltop and whipped the snow around the corner of the house and around her skirt, the powdery wind-borne snow sweeping under her skirt against the fine silk mesh of her stockings, the light cold snow settling like diamond dust on her legs, melting as it touched her skin, tingling on her skin like a thousand tiny arrows shot by the pixies. The pixies—she hadn't thought of the pixies for years. She could remember her father reading in the soft light of the library long ago, and the pictures in the book, dark blue sky of night and snowflakes as big as cockleshells, and a little pixie man riding each snowflake down the wild north wind like a magic steed headed for some forgotten glory. She shivered, from the cold, or perhaps from some thin sense of the lost years so quickly gone, the brief time spent in dreams, such a short space back, and gone now.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

As Diana entered the dim hallway of her home it reminded her again of another age, with the heavy chairs and tables, the umbrella stand, and the tall ugly clock that Mother couldn't bear to part with because it had belonged to her father, to Grandfather Rice, who had made his money from a carpet factory and had built this house early in the century when only rich men owned automobiles and could establish themselves in the Whitemarsh Valley, twenty or more miles from the city.

The solid ugliness of the furniture made her shiver as she walked towards the closet under the stairs, and then she laughed privately at the memory of Daddy's dismal and eternal joke about grandfather's money being left to the clock with Mother as its guardian until it came of age. Daddy was often a tease, so she wasn't always sure what he meant or how serious he was.

In fact, it was Daddy's being a tease about her adolescent loves that had often shown her the weakness she came to see in each affair. She remembered in particular the night exactly a week ago when he had spoken of Harvey several times as a "sound man", and then had asked, "What more can you want of a man?" in such a way that it had seemed to be praising Harvey and yet left the question ringing around in her mind after she went to bed so that she finally switched on the crystal lamp and made a list for herself.

Diana Rice Schuyler Dec. 11, Friday—1936

What I Want of Men:—

1. To think the way I do.
2. To feel the way I do.
3. To like what I like.
4. To be bigger than me in every way so even if he doesn't think and feel the way I do he can be strong enough to make me want to think and feel the way he does.
5. To take care of all the big things and let me take care of all the little things.
6. To be willing to give up anything for me.

Several days later, when the excitement about the King and Mrs. Simpson had died down, she crossed out the sixth require-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment because of some wisdom that told her it was not of a piece with the other five and and that it was more than she could expect of any other man in spite of the King, who had spoken on the radio before supper on the night she made the list.

As she stood in the hall putting her leopard coat on the hanger in the closet under the stairs she heard a voice or voices, one of them like Daddy's, through the closed door of the Walnut Room. Remembering that Mother would inspect the dress, she took a soft old scarf from the closet and picked up the edge of the scarlet silk skirt in her fingers, feeling it cool and hearing it rustle, as she began to wipe at the wet spots, running the hem through her fingers, blotting it dry where it had touched the snow. She let the skirt drop, hearing it rustle again, and stood by the mirror, straightening the waist and smoothing the drape of the scarlet watered silk. She nodded to herself in the mirror, her brown eyes following the curve of her neck as she feathered her hair with her fingers, turning her small neat head from side to side to see the curls fitted close as a cap of golden fleece. "And a big skirt because I'm small," she thought, pirouetting in front of the mirror, seeing the skirt flare like a scarlet bell, and hearing it rustle, and feeling the petticoat settle against her legs underneath.

She skipped to the front door and peeked out through the glass. "Oh, Lord," she thought in panic, "what's happened now? He's backing out." But as she watched the distant fan of light retreating down the drive it stopped and stood still a moment among the bare trees and started coming towards her again.

She ran her fingers lightly up her bare arms over the soft skin, turning the golden bracelets on her wrists for a moment and then touching her necklace, forming a loop of the pearls with her fingers to make the shape of a heart so she could see the white pearls in the glass of the door like a candy heart in the same shape as her face, a winsome face or rather a face that was just saved from being winsome by her long upper lip and her straight sharp nose.

The telephone rang, and she turned halfway from the door to answer it but stopped when she saw Annie hurrying from the Walnut Room in her plum colored uniform. She glanced out at the lights coming up the drive and looked back at Annie bowed low over the phone. And then, for no reason, she put her hands on her ribs and arched her back slightly, standing in the front hall,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

waiting a minute for Annie. And then she ran her hands up over her ribs slowly until her palms and fingers were splayed over her breasts feeling warm through the silk. And she lifted her breasts, squeezing them a little. "Oh my," she said out loud, and then she spun away down the hall, dancing and whirling, her arms held out, settling like a nesting bird, smoothing the scarlet silk, sedate, walking nonchalantly into the Walnut Room ahead of Annie.

"Here I am," she sang.

There was no sound except the voice on the radio droning in the corner. She looked around the over-furnished room at the leather chairs and Mother's dove gray sofa and Daddy's thousands of books and the ornate lamps on the endless tables, but the room was empty except for the voice, which she now recognized and heard more clearly, although it was strained through a fine crackling of trans-atlantic static as it said: "—tell you that I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as King, as I would wish, without the help and support of the woman I love. And I want you to know that the decision I have made has been mine and mine alone. This was a thing I had to judge entirely for myself."

As the voice hesitated she turned back to Annie. "Where are Daddy and Mummy?" she asked. "I thought they were here."

"They went to the theatre, Miss Diana. Didn't they tell you?"

"Oh yes, of course. But who's listening to the radio?"

"If you please, Miss, I didn't know you would be home so early. It's a record on a station in Germantown."

"Haven't you heard it often enough to know it by heart now?"

"No, Miss, I'm always called away. I never can hear it straight through."

She was a plain dark-haired girl with a faint moustache on her upper lip and with no figure but with fine dark eyes sunk in a face that seemed too lined and wan for twenty-five. Diana had a sharp and depressing vision of Annie's present and future on this hill stranded in the valley with no family to make a match for her, no place to go on her day off but the movie palaces in Germantown. She probably sent a money order regularly to her family on the other side so she could not even afford the minor luxury of buying herself fine underwear. And there was nothing for her to look forward to.

Diana placed a hand on Annie's arm. "Go listen to him," she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said. "If the phone rings again I'll answer it. Was it anything important, Annie?"

"Only the op'rator, Miss Diana. She was trying to locate some gentleman for an out of town call. I wrote it on the pad."

"Go listen to your King," Diana said. "I'll take care of it."

She closed the door gently and walked to the telephone table. The pad was covered with a few loosely scrawled words. "Call from Southport, Connect-i-cut for Mr. Harold Stroud. Will call later."

She wandered towards the back of the hall and into the kitchen, thinking that she would make them something warm to eat. They should be there soon. She flicked on the overhead light and took the milk and eggs and butter and sausage meat out of the refrigerator. She had cut the sausage into small patties and beaten the eggs to a creamy froth when she heard the outside door pulled open behind her back and the squeaky voice say, "Hello, penguin, it's cold outside," and the door slam shut, sending a gust of icy air around her as she waited for the other voice that didn't come. Parmalee went on, "The juggernaut quit on the hill with a dead battery, and I came up the drive. He had some snowshoes in back —God knows, he has everything in the back of that junk wagon. He decided to climb the hill in front. He said he felt it was a challenge, like Admiral Byrd climbing the Ross Ice Shelf. I guess he wanted to prove something to himself."

"Snowshoes?" she said, turning around quickly to find Parmalee bent over, perched on one foot as he pulled the heavy crusted boot off the other. "Snowshoes in Philadelphia," she said incredulously.

"That's the way he is."

"I think it's perfect," she said. "I really have to see it." And then she started towards the door to the hall before he stopped her.

"Wait a minute, Danny," he called. "I'd leave him alone."

"Why?" she asked impatiently.

"They've been phoning him from Connecticut all afternoon. His grandfather is pretty sick. He calls him Gran. He's all the family Harold ever had."

"Yes?"

"Harold's pretty upset. He'd never have come with me tonight if he hadn't promised for months."

"Oh. But what about the snowshoes?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That's the way he is, like some big hermit or something. I can't change him."

"But he must need help."

"*You* can't change him, Danny," he warned.

She looked at her brother's wrinkled face, so much like Daddy's when he pressed his lips together with such finality.

"I don't want to change him, Puff, but he needs help, and he doesn't have anyone to help him, even you." She kissed him on the cheek and went to the window aimlessly, feeling sad and almost like singing or perhaps dancing by herself, as if she could hear faraway music while she whirled with her arms empty waiting for him.

"Now, now, Danny. Don't get any ideas."

"Dear Puff, straight from the shoulder." She smiled at him fondly.

"Well, I mean it, lay off this time." He stared at her for a moment before he dropped his dark eyes from hers and noticed the things on the table. "What's that?" he asked. "Are you making a snack?" He looked at her again. "That's swell of you, Danny." He began to shake off his heavy coat as he talked. "Gosh, I'm cold all the way through. I think I'll take a hot shower. I'll be right back." He had his coat over one arm as he walked towards the door. He stopped next to her and put his free hand on her bare shoulder. "I'm sorry, sis. Forget it, will you."

She gave him a quick kiss on the cheek and pushed him towards the door. After he'd gone she perched on the stool and went on with her work. When she had everything ready she lifted two heavy cast iron frying pans from under the stove and placed them on two burners, which she lit and turned down low so that the spiky rings of violet flame were beginning to flicker and two or three of the pale little buds in each circle popped out completely before she turned the handle back up just enough to hold the flame steady.

The eggs and sausage were simmering when she turned to look up at the clock and saw Harold standing in the hall door. He was not exactly what she had pictured in her mind from meeting him in the dark. He was big, heavily built through the shoulders and chest, which she knew already. But she couldn't imagine anyone in his right mind wearing saddle shoes and white flannels in winter as he did. As for his jacket, it was a racy black and white

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hound's tooth pattern. The middle button was entirely missing so that not even a thread was left hanging. And his tangled hair was windblown and uncombed with a stray wisp partly falling across one side of his wide forehead, just as she had first seen it in the matchlight in the snow. And the greek nose was too sharp, like hers, and the lean cheeks too thin, and the mouth too soft until she saw it begin to smile, and saw the smile slip by an almost imperceptible tautening of the skin across his cheeks and in a soft arc around his cheek bones to the corners of his emerald eyes and to the dark centers of those, and she felt the blush hot on her cheeks and all down her neck, knowing that he had caught her spying on him and had turned away amused.

"Hello, Diana," he said.

"Hello, Harold. I'm making something to eat. Won't you sit down."

"Thanks. This is very hospitable of you." He walked over and stood directly in front of her as if there was something more he wanted to say desperately if he could remember the words.

She twisted away suddenly, hearing her big skirt rustle as she leaned over the stove to lift the sausages onto the plates, feeling herself in a strange state of suspension, not knowing what to think of him or what to say to him. She served all three plates, putting Parmalee's back in the oven. He had wandered over to the window.

"The stars are out," he said.

"Yes," she said. "You can get a fork in that drawer. Do you want a glass of milk? I didn't make any coffee."

"This is a beautiful clear night," he said, "now that the snow has stopped. It's a beautiful night for Orion."

She was already seated at the enamel table when he walked back.

"Do you know about Orion?" he asked.

She finished a mouthful and looked at him as he sat down across from her. "Orion?" she said. "The stars, you mean? The constellation?"

"Yes. It's all over the sky tonight. And yet, I don't exactly mean the constellation," he explained, as he speared a piece of sausage and began eating. "I mean the god in the myth; the god who fell in love with the moon goddess, Artemis or Diana, when they were hunting in the woods one night." And then quickly, before she could say anything, he looked up from his plate with a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grin and said, "These eggs are almost as good as eggs Stroud. What else do you make?"

"Simple things like omelets. I knew how to make a jelly roll once, but I'm out of practice. What are eggs Stroud?"

"Pure ambrosia. Louis de Bellancourt invented them for Gran."

"How fabulous—having eggs invented for you."

"For Gran—not me. And there's that New York word again."

"Fabulous? Oh, I forgot." She smiled. "Who is Louis de Bell-something? Should I know?"

"He was at the Ritz in Paris before he became our chef. He died last summer. He used to tell me that women would never make good cooks because they had to nourish men instead of exciting them. He gave me lessons and made me practise and practise. I never told Gran."

"So you're a cook, too?"

"In a way, but only of silly things like poulet de la reine. I never could master eggs Stroud. There was somethng wrong about my timing. But I'll bet you could do them perfectly."

She watched him as he removed a cigarette from the breast pocket of his outlandish jacket and searched for a match in the pockets of his flannels, finally getting up and taking a kitchen match from the stove. As he sat down and bent his head to the matchlight she caught a swift glance from his eyes that she knew she wasn't meant to see. It was serious and sober, without a speck of acting or flirtation. He blew out the match and turned away quickly. She looked down at her lap and at her hands, clasping them quietly together as she felt the impact of discovering something solid behind the many masks he put on so easily. She placed her elbows on the table and rested her chin on her palms as she looked up at him.

"Parmalee talks about you all the time," she said. "He thinks you're pretty wonderful."

"He talks about you, too, and he has all those pictures of you by the swimming pool last summer."

"Oh no!"

"But yes. Although none of them do you justice. Not half what that dress does for you. You look like Christmas candy."

"Thank you."

"Don't thank me. I'm off of women."

"What's that mean?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Simply that I have too much work to do. I'm on probation at college. My best subjects, English and Philosophy. I haven't scheduled my time right."

"Was it the same before? I mean, were you off of women even before you didn't schedule your time right?"

"Christ, yes. I've been off them all this year. Not like Freshman year. But you've got a pinched look so I can tell you don't want to hear a damned thing about Freshman year. By the way, that's a real dress you've got on."

"Yes. Thank you again. It's my favorite."

"I like the way it leaves your arms and shoulders bare and then fits like a sheath down around your waist and then spreads out like a waterfall in the fireworks on the Fourth of July. It makes you look like a celebration."

"It makes me feel like one, too," she said. "You know, it's a shame to wear it when I'm off of men."

"A crying shame."

"Men can't think of anything but sex," she said.

"Too true, the beasts, too true."

"You aren't like that, are you?"

"Perish the thought. In fact, I want you to know that I have only the highest and purest thoughts about things like Plato and the ethereal beauty of women and how very nice your eyes look now that you're smiling."

"You're smiling, too. Like the Cheshire cat."

"That's not what you think it is," he said. "I have a true feeling of heavenly benediction, as if I was getting the call. Perhaps I should go into a monastery."

"And leave me?"

"You could come, too."

"Oh, I'd like that. You could study philosophy or—what would you study?"

"Philosophy's all right. Diplomacy's better. I've always wanted to be a Prince of the Church like Cardinal Richelieu, and wield unseen power. We could meet at prayers and stand in line counting our beads and glancing at each other occasionally with all our bitter knowledge of the world."

"Yes, and I could illuminate your prayer books for you. You didn't know I was a painter, did you?"

"A painter with galleries and showings and things?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, no. Just a little painter, just for myself. I've never shown them to anyone but my teacher."

"Aren't they any good?"

"Don't tease, Harold. This is important to me."

"Is it? Of course it is. Maybe too important. All nice sensitive young girls want to paint or write poetry."

"Is that so?" she asked. She stuck her tongue out at him. "I'm certainly glad you know everything we want to do, Mr. Stroud."

"I didn't say everything."

"Now, now. I can hear perfectly well. That's what you told me."

"In a sense it has some truth if you—"

"You're just floundering," she said.

"None of them are as beautiful as you."

"Thanks," she said.

He laughed with a deep warm laugh. "All right," he said, "maybe you are a painter. I don't know. I'd have to see."

"You can see right now if you want. Up in my room."

"Suppose I don't like them?" he asked.

"I wouldn't ask you unless I knew you would."

"But suppose I don't?"

"I'll have to burn them all and start over."

"Burn them? Listen, Diana, my opinion isn't worth that much. That's too dramatic. Why should you care what I—but you do care, don't you?"

"I'd burn them. Every last one."

"You know," he said, as he rose from his chair and loomed very large across from her and started around the table. "You know," he said, "I believe you would." He had just put one firm hand on her bare shoulder and was leaning over her as she tilted her head back to look up at him and watch his lips moving as he said again, "I believe you would," when they stopped suddenly, startled by the shouting.

It was Parmalee's voice from upstairs. The telephone was ringing. She jumped up and started for the hall as she heard the flip-flop of his slippers. He got there first and called for Harold while Annie went back to the Walnut Room. Diana returned to the kitchen and picked up the two plates to put them in the sink, letting the cold water run as she heard Parmalee come in behind her and clatter around getting his plate out of the stove. She

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peered out the window, squinting her eyes to see the stars, but she couldn't see Orion at all. And then she remembered that the window faced north, while Orion was always in the southern sky. A beautiful night for Orion indeed! Harold hadn't even seen Orion. She turned off the water to let the dishes soak and wiped her hands on the clean roller towel just as he came back.

He spoke quickly and urgently to her brother not looking towards her at all. "Jocko, we've got to get that car going again —even if I have to buy a new battery."

Parmalee was in the middle of eating his eggs. "Leave it there," he said. "Nobody's going to use the drive tonight."

"Jocko, c'mon. I mean it."

Parmalee put down his fork and looked up at him. "How bad do you mean it, boy?"

"Four alarm, Jocko. C'mon. I'll tell you."

Without another word her brother stood up and followed Harold into the hall, neither of them as much as glancing at her as they left. They had an air of being insulated in some private masculine world of problems whose importance she was incapable of understanding.

She heard their voices murmuring for a minute or two before Parmalee's slippers went flip-flopping up the stairs again. She was leaning back against the sink, humming to herself, leaning on her hands behind her on the cold metal of the sink, rocking back and forth slowly on her hands as she tried to remember the words from the Benny Goodman record. "Goodnight, my love," she sang softly, "the tired old moon is descending. Goodnight, my—," but there wasn't any moon. There wasn't any moon tonight. She looked down at her dress. Like a celebration, he'd said. Like fireworks on the Fourth of July. And then she felt herself beginning to run, bumping the table lightly as she passed it on the way to the hall.

Just as she expected he was already in his overcoat. It was a Chesterfield coat, new looking, draped down over his white flannels as he kneeled to buckle on the snowshoes.

"We have a battery charger in the garage," she cried, panting.

"I don't think that's the answer now," he said, leaning on his haunches and smiling up at her.

"I know how to work it."

"You don't understand," he said gently. "I haven't time now."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, you must have. You ought to try it."

He stood up, shaking the snowshoes to see that they were buckled tight. He looked down on her gravely as he buttoned his overcoat.

"You want to help, don't you, Diana?" he asked, but it was more a statement than a question. "I might have a try at your battery charger, even if I only get enough juice for one start. It might help. As for you," he said, "you come along with me. I guess I'm going to need you."

"I'll get my ski suit on," she said, still panting. "I'll meet you down by the car."

She heard him walking kalump-kalump towards the door as she tore up the stairs and down the hall to her room with her hands behind her undoing the buttons all the way. In a second she had wriggled out of the dress and the petticoat, letting them settle to the floor. She grabbed the ski suit from the rack in her closet and thrust her legs into the trim navy blue pants, one leg at a time, and slid the zipper up the side, her left side, up over the bump of her hips and—"Damn"—it was caught, caught, caught on her silk underpants, and there, free. Now the wool socks and then a sweater over her bra, and she was running again, running down the back stairs and through the kitchen, carrying her heavy studded boots in one hand and struggling into the jacket with the other. A moment was spent on the back steps with the boots and their rawhide laces, and then she was running breathless over the snow to the garage. She seized the poles and the skis, buckling the clamps tight before launching herself out on the crusted snow and swooping softly down the hill in the ghostly light, right by his dark and struggling shape, shouting at him, and on down and down and down until the car loomed ahead, and she slid to a stop by its side.

III

His car seemed very strange and foreign and sort of old fashioned, composed as it was of queer box shapes and sudden jutting planes. The hood and the windshield went straight up and the roof was square and canvas and probably convertible and a luggage rack projected like a shelf from the rear. There was a muted gleam of chrome in the starlight that reflected on the maze of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wire spokes in each enormous wheel and on the headlamps as big as silver punchbowls and on little bright touches here and there like the tire covers imbedded in each front fender and the metal clef on the side near the rear, where she supposed it was part of the folding mechanism for the roof. The very indistinctness of the car in the night and the tiny lights of the reflections glinting like diamonds gave her a strong impression of faded elegance, although, as she took off her skis and stuck them in the snow and circled curiously around it, the elegance appeared to evaporate like a superficial film, leaving only the square brutal bulk of the machine, ominous and broad and long and squat like some armored monster.

"It's quite a chariot, isn't it?" he asked, coming up behind her. He must have stepped out of his snowshoes and run down the slope after she passed him because he was carrying one of them in each hand, swinging them loosely like tennis racquets. "It's my first grown up love," he said with a gentle mocking tone. "A twenty-nine La Salle phaeton with a Fleetwood body built specially for Dad just before he went off and got himself killed in his plane flying up the Amazon. Gran had it put up on blocks in the garage after that and had Frank polish it every month for years until he gave it to me for my eighteenth birthday."

"That's odd, isn't it?" she said. "Why didn't he sell it or at least trade it in on a new car?"

"Oh, Gran was always sentimental as hell about it, in a quiet way, of course." Harold stopped and smacked the two snowshoes together to knock the snow off, as if he was suddenly embarrassed at the sound of his own voice but couldn't dam it up for long. "This old stone crusher has meant an awful lot to several people, including me, something like the way you feel about your paintings because they're private and you don't give a damn what anyone else thinks of you as long as they leave that part of you alone to yourself and don't ask to look at it. The only difference is that I don't care a hoot these days who looks at this buggy or what they say, though I used to terribly. And everyone has something to say about it. Even good old Parmalee says it's the gypsy caravan out of *The Wind in the Willows*."

"Isn't that just like Parmalee?"

"Exactly. Precise and fuzzy at the same time. No one else in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the world could find that kind of whimsy in this old crate. I'd like to know what you think of it, Diana."

"To be perfectly honest," she replied, "I don't like it. I don't like it at all, and I've been trying to think why, and I believe it's because it reminds me of those dreadful cars in the gangster movies."

"Exactly the way I feel," he cried. "It's strictly a getaway car, something out of the twenties. If it hadn't been for Gran I think I would have sold it months ago and bought me a neat little Ford —and maybe I will now."

He opened the back door of the car and tossed the snowshoes on top of what seemed to be a tremendous heap of shadows and shapes, all of them in a confused convoluted mass that shivered with endless little shimmering movements as the snowshoes fell among them. She felt a piercing childish need to know what they were before he closed the door again, as if she realized that this was her only chance that would be lost forever if she let it go.

"Just a second," she said, laying her hand on his arm. "Let me see what you have in there. Is that all the loot from your last stick-up?"

"No," he laughed, and it seemed a very nice sort of laugh, infectious, and full of grace, and with more happiness than she would have expected from his somber thoughtful tone of a moment before. "It's just *things*," he said. "Things I've collected here and there for years and have been carrying around with me because I don't know what else to do with them. Most of them are unimportant, but I like things," he explained. "Parmalee says I kept several hock shops out of bankruptcy during the depression. Most of it's just junk now but let me show you one of the better gadgets."

He reached into the dark heap and produced a little box as if he had known just where it was all along or perhaps knew where everything was in there by touch. It was no bigger than a bedside alarm and had a little crank handle. When he cranked it there was a noise like pebbles being sloshed around in a flower vase and a dim red spark appeared behind a lens and grew orange and then yellow, spreading out in a bigger circle every second until she saw it was a bulb lighting up. When he had it really going it threw out a strong beam of white light on the snow and the car. Then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he let the crank go so that the noise died slowly and the white light began to fade to yellow.

He was about to put it back when she laid her hand on his arm again and pleaded, "Won't you let me play with it for a while? I like things too."

"Sure, Diana. Here it is, and here's old Parmalee. Now we can get started." He closed the back door. "I think we flooded it before, Jocko," he said. "The choke is pretty tricky on this car. Don't pull it until you feel the motor really give a kick. All right?"

"All right. But I didn't flood it before. If you don't believe me you can get in and ride herd on your goddamned choke, and *I'll* do the cranking."

"Well, maybe it wasn't the choke," Harold said soothingly, "let me try it once on the battery and see if I can catch it." He climbed in, and after a moment she heard a noise like an old sleepy dog grumbling under the hood.

"No soap," he said, climbing out.

"What about it?" Parmalee asked. "Who's going to crank it?"

"Now, Jocko, you know very well that I count on you at the controls." She saw him put his arm around her brother's shoulders like the big bear and the little bear, and she thought, "I believe he really loves him." And Harold turned to her, almost as if she'd spoken out loud to him, and said: "Will you help me, too?"

"Of course."

"Will you wind that thing and shine the light on me around here—" he was walking, and she followed. "Right here," he said. They were in front of the giant radiator. She began to wind the light, hearing the pebbly noises as she saw him lean over and put the crank handle into the car and begin pulling it around, bobbing up and down slowly in the complete darkness that diminished as her light warmed up, so that she realized with a pleasant but jolting shock that he had done this many times in utter darkness and had no need of her light, but had asked her anyway.

No matter what they did, and she saw him wipe his forehead several times in the cold night, there was no sign of real life from the motor. Once it coughed and almost seemed to catch, but that was followed by failure after failure until he straightened up and turned his back to the hood.

"I think it's flooded again," he whispered. "I guess I'll have to carry that damned battery up to your charger."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why don't we get the Packard from the garage and push you up the hill," she suggested.

"An excellent idea." He walked around the side of the car as she let the light fade out. "Jocko, I'm pooped from cranking, and Diana has a swell idea. Why don't you go and get the Packard and give me a push up the hill?"

"Oh, hell, let's leave the damned thing here and go to bed."

"Now, please, Jocko. I told you in the hall."

"And I told you, too."

"No, Jocko, no. It won't do. C'mon."

"All right, boy. You're sure jittery."

When Parmalee had gone his way up the drive, Harold climbed in behind the steering wheel and lit a cigarette. Her eyes had grown accustomed to the pale reflected light from the snow so that the bright flash of the match seemed to throw a segment of his face into such sharp and startling relief that she barely restrained her desire to reach out and touch his cheek.

"Would you like a cigarette, little sister of Parmalee?"

"Not this minute." She tood on one foot and then the other, and then she hunched her shoulders and tucked the lamp box under one arm in such a way that the crank wouldn't stick into her ribs while she clamped the box tight under her arm and dug her frozen hands into the pockets of her ski jacket.

"You remind me of a poem," he said playfully. " 'Ah, bitter chill it was. The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold.' Why are you standing there? Why don't you stop hopping around and get in beside me so you can be my gun moll?"

She ran around the front, slipping on the snow and almost losing her balance, but catching herself in time, and not even dropping the light as she got to the door with the big old handle and slid in beside him on the leather seat.

"I don't know *anything* about being a gun moll," she said, breathless and excited. "What do gun molls do? Oh, I'm sure I couldn't be one. I'm too much of a sissy. I was in such a hurry to get my ski suit on that I forget to bring any—"

"Here, take mine. I've been wearing them, so they're warm."

"I couldn't. I couldn't."

"I've got an extra pair back there, coonskin. I'll get them when my hands are cold. Beside, I want to tell you what all this happy lark is about. You've probably been wondering."

"A little," she said. "But I think I know. Your grandfather is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dying, and it's the end of something for you, and you have to get home."

"That's the general idea. He's had two heart attacks before, and he's over seventy. I'm afraid this is the last one. Parmalee says it's silly of me to go now. He says that either Gran is dying or he isn't dying, and if he is I won't be in time, and if he isn't I can go tomorrow. So let's go to bed. That's the way he talks."

"I always thought Parmalee should be a lawyer," she said.

"Exactly." He said it with a flat tone as if it was a reflex action. She looked at him, but there was not much to see in the dark. She moved closer. When he puffed on his cigarette the glow lighted up his nose and his eyes and the wisp of hair in the corner of his forehead.

"Where were you in your thoughts just now?" she asked.

"I think you know very well, Diana."

"Yes," she said. "You were home. You were home with him, probably holding his hand." She took off one glove and put her hand in his, feeling his long cold fingers closing around hers. "Personally, I think Parmalee should be spanked."

"Hell, no. That's just his way of trying to calm me down when he thinks I'm all broken up about something. He always says I'm too impetuous, and I probably am."

"You aren't," she said. "You mustn't believe anything like that. Not the way Parmalee means it, not in a bad way. Maybe you've just got more energy and excitement than he has. Maybe he envies you. Anyway, I like you the way you are."

"Do you," he said thoughtfully and squeezed her hand. "That's a real blessing, isn't it?"

"I guess so. I don't know anyone who would hug me the first time he meets me, shake my hand the second time, and give me a lecture on old cars the third. But you have to stop being Admiral Byrd and Cardinal Richelieu and Little Caesar driving this car and whoever else you are at other times. It's too much of a strain on me."

"I guess it is," he said. "But I can't stop all those things at once, Diana. The only thing I'll promise is that I'll get rid of this car as soon as I can."

"Good," she said, and then asked, "What did you mean when you said it was a blessing? Why? What's a blessing?"

And then he laughed, and she heard again that deep pleasure in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the laugh as he squeezed her hand once more. "Diana," he said. "What a beautiful name. It fits you perfectly. I said it was a blessing because I have a feeling that I'm going to see a great deal more of you from now on. It made me happy to realize that, and that's all it was."

She moved her fingers in his, which were warm now and just the same temperature as hers. "I have the same feeling," she said, "and it also makes me very happy because I didn't expect anything like this. The best part of all is that it seems to keep getting nicer every minute."

She felt him uncurl his fingers, and she had a sudden panic that he was going to leave her until she realized that all he was doing was moving his hand so he could thread his fingers through hers and close his fingers, and she could fold hers and feel the hard tense cords on the back of his hand with the tips of her fingers.

"So that's the way it is," he said. "I'm certainly glad you told me. It isn't often in my life that I hear about something that gets nicer every minute. It sounds like people falling in love, doesn't it?"

"Heavens no! Everyone who has any sense knows that falling in love is a tremendously exciting thing that goes up and up and up like a sky rocket. This is much more comfortable, like going through a lot of rooms with each one better furnished than the one before."

"That sounds like the way I'd like it. Sky rockets are usually disappointing. At least, I think so, and I think I'm falling in love."

She saw the bright arc of his cigarette as he spun it out the open window.

"It's getting stuffy in here," he said. "We need some air."

"Anthing you say, dear," she replied.

She watched him as he reached up and unscrewed something above the windshield and half lifted himself from the seat, leaning over the back of the seat, pushing the top, folding it back and down, as far as he could reach.

"Well," he said, "look who's come to our party."

"Who?" She twisted around quickly. "Oh," she said, "just the old moon." She slid around and up on her knees beside him and put her arm through gently between his arm and his side, but he lifted his arm and swung it back and put it through between her arm and her ribs, where she could feel it when she pressed it, feel it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hard against her ribs. He opened his palm in the full moonlight and held his pale silver fingers cupped until she laid her fist on his palm, and then he curled his fingers lightly, closing them on her small fist as if it was something immensely valuable and very breakable.

"Yes, it's just the old moon," he said. "It's always highly romantic at any other time of year, but never in winter. It's too cold then. The winter moon is frowned upon by all the poets, but I like the winter, even the moon in winter. I like everything about the winter. I like the fences sticking up out of the snow in the fields and the creaking of ice in the trees and the way everything feels on a still cold day with a little brook slowly freezing at sunset. I like to be cold and to look up at all those stars. It makes me feel like slapping my thighs."

"You're queer," she said, but she didn't move her hand in his. "I'd gladly spend the winter in Bermuda and never miss it once."

"You just don't know," he said. "You just don't understand that the wintertime has all the heat and growth and death of the rest of the year leashed and pent up and frozen inside it."

In the bright full moonlight she could see his frosty breath come out from his lips as he spoke.

"You're rather remarkable," she said, "but I don't quite understand winter the way you do."

"Most people don't," he said. He opened his hand quickly and pulled his arm out sharply from next to her ribs and turned himself on the seat so when she turned towards him she could see the long dark moon shadow from his nose and the smaller curling shadow from the lock of hair. She saw him raise one hand towards her face, and she felt his fingers touch her cheek. "There aren't too many people who understand what's trapped under the ice of winter that makes it so much more dramatic than any other season of the year."

"Dramatic?—under the ice?" she asked with some surprise.

And then she saw the smile beginning at his soft mouth in the full moonlight, and this time she knew very well that it wasn't amusement, and perhaps it hadn't been amusement before up in the house when he caught her spying on him at the kitchen door. Perhaps it had been a way of saying something to her, helping her to see something that was very real to him but was difficult to put in words.

"Don't you know what's caught under the winter ice, Diana?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he asked, and she felt now that she would believe anything he said. "Don't you know what's under the ice and under the rocks and under the frozen ground?" He spoke as if it were a litany. "It's all the heat from the red center of the earth. It's the molten heat that is under our feet just a little way down all the year round, but it seems closer and more horrible in winter when the mountains crack open in the long arctic night and pour red lava out on the crusted enamel of ice so that the glaciers melt and trickle away as if they were bleeding secretly from underneath—"

"Oh *my*," she interrupted. "I think I see."

"Yes, darling," he said. "I knew you would."

"Of course," she sang, and she closed her eyes and pressed his hand tight pressing it hard against her cheek. She opened her eyes and looked up and saw his eyes perfectly still looking into hers and the full moonlight around them and on his skin and on his lips. "Is that us dear?" she asked. "Is that what you mean? Is that us with all that heat and pressure?"

He nodded. She could feel his breathing as he placed a palm on each of her cheeks and slid his fingers slowly under her ears and around her neck to the back of her head. She felt herself whispering words a long way off. "How do you know all these things?" she whispered. "How do you know all these wonderful things, darling?"

She could feel his hands firm at the back of her head and his cool nose touching hers, baffled for a moment until she moved her nose slightly to one side, and then his soft mouth on hers, cool and strange, everything feeling cool and strange as her head went back against his strong hands and her eyelids drooped and she felt her lips soften and her arms go around his big chest, pulling herself to him, pulling her breasts hard against him, feeling her heart begin to pump violently as his lips opened—

And then it stopped all at once as he raised his head and she heard—oh, lord in heaven—it was Parmalee coming down the hill, honking like mad, so that they fell apart quickly into their places on the seat.

After that she heard all the various distant metallic noises made by Parmalee driving the Packard past them and turning it around and getting in place behind them. She noticed that her hands were cold, and she put on his gloves again, the black leather gloves with the bunny rabbit lining. She was feeling a little tired and spent and rather annoyed at Parmalee, who seemed to be doing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such a bumpy job of pushing them, so that he made her head roll back and forth on the gloves every time he bumped. From where she was resting her head on the gloves on the window frame she could watch Harold's strong hands on the steering wheel, and she could sometimes glance up quickly at his intent face as he reached out in the dark to pull at something, work something, probably adjusting that choke. The leather of the gloves began to feel warm and smooth against her cheek, and she noticed a faint smell from the gloves, something like oil or gasoline, so that all at once she had a picture in her mind of his working over the car in winter with these gloves on, fixing it up, getting it in shape. And it made her wonder idly what it was really like to be a gun moll or any kind of moll, and though she knew she was being romantic she persisted in it from some left over and unrelieved pressure, and she projected herself for a moment into a scene where a guy came home at night and said something very nice to her like: "It's good to be home," or, "What's for supper?" or, "It's time to go to bed, dear."

And then she noticed the light on the instrument panel warming up and getting brighter as she heard a noise like a motorboat racing and then slowing down as the light faded a little and as she watched him shift gears. As soon as they began to roll she sat up straight, looking out ahead at the dim yellow lights on the dark tire tracks in the snow. As they reached the long hill and started to climb, the car bucked several times before it stopped with the motor racing and the wheels spinning until he pulled the hand brake on and let the motor idle.

"Damn it," he said, "this is what happened before. I couldn't make this lousy hill without chains." Suddenly she heard the loud frightening noise of chains partly from earlier memory that evening and partly from the Packard coming up behind her.

He started to get out the door. "I'll ask Parmalee to push us," he said.

She watched him for a moment as he slid himself out of the seat. When he was standing up and about to move she called quickly, "Don't go away."

He stopped and looked back in at her. "I'm not going far, darling; I'll be right back."

"You want to get to Connecticut tonight, don't you?" she asked, feeling a terrible depression seeping through her. "You want to see your grandfather tonight, don't you? That's true, isn't it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes," he said, and then he said, "of course," and in the reflected light on his face she saw an expression of intent ferocity that hardly had time to register on her before it blended into a smile of relief as he climbed back in, waving at Parmalee to stop his honking, and taking her hand in his. "Of course it's true. Did you think it wasn't?"

"Oh, I'm all mixed up." She began to shiver uncontrollably as she talked. "I'm so ashamed, Harold. I've been such a bitch. I should have told you before. That battery charger of ours takes all night, and you can't hurry it up. There's no use going up there to the garage. I should have told you before, only I liked it so, and I didn't want you to go."

He moved his knees until they were touching hers, and he took off the gloves and held both her hands in both of his. "I know all about battery chargers, Diana," and when he said her name it sounded like a caress. "The truth is—we both liked it so. As for the battery, I passed a gas station down the road when we came in tonight. I can back out now and get a new one there."

"There you go again," she said, "always trying to help me, like asking me to hold the light for you. But it won't do now, Harold. I have to tell you the rest of it. I had a fight tonight with Harvey Trimmer. He's been my—oh, what can I call him that doesn't sound stupid? Mother calls him my beau, but that seems so creaky, I don't—"

"Why not call him your heart throb?"

"Heart throb! Oh, my goodness, what language! If you only knew Harvey."

"But I do know him."

"Oh, yes," she said. "Well, you only met him, you don't really know—but maybe you do know him, maybe you're right. Maybe he was my heart throb all along." She laughed a little and squeezed both his hands and went on quickly. "Anyway it's sort of final now, about Harvey, I mean, at least in my own mind, but I was upset about that, trying to decide. And then there's my party tomorrow night, and I've been thinking about that ever since I can remember. So you can see how it was when we met tonight. I was so full of something, I don't know what, excitement, tension, I don't know what. And I used you. That's the truth. I deliberately used you. I just chased you like some cheap common prostitute. That's the truth and I'm ashamed of myself. I just chased you like my name, like Diana and Artemis, like those

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

huntresses like you said as if you know everything that's going on everywhere—"

She broke off and let go of his hands and picked up the gloves from her lap and the little lamp from the seat beside her.

"Here they are," she said. "You'll need them for the trip. Thanks for lending them to me. You'd better go now."

"Such cheap dramatics," he said. "And I think you enjoy it."

"What?"—she felt as if she had been slapped.

"You heard me."

"I did, I did. But I don't know what you mean. Are you trying to shock me?"

"You need a spanking worse than Parmalee," he said, although his voice didn't sound angry. "But not for what you think. All this childish talk about using me! Did you think you just discovered that, Diana? Did you think that no one ever used anyone else for anything in the whole history of the world until now? Hell."

She felt her skin flushing hot, but before she could answer there was a pounding noise along the side of the car, and Parmalee was standing by Harold's door.

"Sorry, folks," he said. "No all night parking allowed here."

"I'm leaving now, Jocko. If you'll move that lousy goddamned tank of yours I'll back out of here and be on my way. You can give your sister a ride up to the goddamned house."

She got out and slammed the door. "I'd rather walk," she said. "I have to get my skis, thank you."

Both of them were looking at her. Parmalee leaned his elbows on the window frame and put his chin in his hands. "Hold it folks," he said. "Before we all break out in happy boisterous farewells let me tell you what happened up at the garage. Annie saw the lights on and phoned from the house. She was trying to get you, boy. It seems there was another call from Southport just after we left; a guy named Loomis; I guess he's in charge because he gave Annie the message, and she wrote it all down. It seems that this Loomis was pretty riled because he'd just gotten hold of you, boy, and told you that your Gran died suddenly before supper tonight, and it seems that you hung up on him before he had a chance to talk to you about your plans. It seems that he wants to be sure that you're coming right home for the funeral and all that kind of stuff."

She put her hands on the door and felt the iron cold metal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as she saw Harold turn his face away from her and towards her brother.

"Well, Jocko?" he asked.

"*You didn't tell me he died, boy.*"

"I didn't tell myself until a couple of minutes ago."

Parmalee looked up at her, his sister, and then away towards Harold.

"So that's the way it was," he said. "All right." He started to walk away and stopped. "Do you need me now?" he asked.

"Not now, Jocko, except to call Loomis and say I've left."

"I'll call him, boy."

"Can I come after Christmas instead?"

"I'll be waiting for you."

After the Packard was gone she reached out a hand. "Lend me a hankie, Harold," she asked.

When he gave it to her he said, "You see, Diana, you gave me as much as you took, maybe more."

She took the white handkerchief out of his hand without touching him.

"I know," she said. "I just saw that," she said. "And I also saw how much more you've given me than I knew about before. Thank you, Harold."

"I hope it's a beautiful party tomorrow night," he said. "You deserve it. You deserve a fabulous party."

"It's got to be; it's got to be fabulous. Lots of old friends are coming; people I've known for years. I'm sorry you can't be there; but you have a long trip," she said.

"A very long one. It'll be dawn when I get there. Goodnight," he said.

"Goodnight."

After he had gone she went back to pick up her skis and her poles, and as she straightened up wearily she caught a glimpse, from the way her head was turned or from some trick of the mind, so that now she could see Orion standing up above the house in the winter sky, huge and a little dim in the moonlight it was true, but very easy to see when you knew where to look and knew that he would be there every night, so that she could see his outline even as she looked down again and tucked her skis and her poles under her arms, too weary to put them over her shoulder, as she went off up the drive for the last time that night and for the first time alone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

A Reading of the Sonnets

I

IF THE WORD "FACT" BE GIVEN its proper meaning, our external knowledge concerning the Sonnets is limited to two facts, two dates. The first is a reference, in Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia,* to Shakespeare's "sugard sonnets among his private friends". The date of this is 1598, in which year Shakespeare was thirty-four. The second is the publication of the Sonnets in 1609. All else is conjecture, ranging from the rational through the plausible to the certifiable. From Meres' remark it would not be safe to conclude that *all* the Sonnets had been written by 1598, but it does seem reasonable to conclude that a good many of them had been; he would hardly have included them, as he does, in a list of Shakespeare's productions, if there had been only a handful. The phrase "among his private friends" indicates the kind of public they were written for, the sort of target they were aimed at: that kind of semi-private manuscript circulation (the equivalent of the modern "limited edition") which was so common in Renaissance literature. The fact that Meres, who was a very obscure scribbler, had heard of them, probably read them himself, shows that this sort of privacy was hardly leak-proof. There is nothing surprising in their having stayed in manuscript[1] for at least eleven years; Donne's love-poetry remained unprinted for nearly forty, but was very widely known. When the Sonnets were eventually printed, their publication shows signs of furtiveness and mystery; it looks like the enterprise of a pirate who had secured a manuscript of the author who was, by 1609, the most famous playwright of his time.

The first impression which a quick, unprejudiced reading of these 154 sonnets must give is that they are not a unity. There is no coherent plot or dominant theme; mood and manner vary enormously, and the connections between the changes are often abrupt and often obscure. Within this miscellany can be seen

[1]With the exception of two, printed in *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some groups which do hold together. The first seventeen, for instance, are all addressed to a beautiful young nobleman, urging him to hurry up and get married in order to perpetuate his beauty in offspring. This is followed by a much longer group, still addressed to the young man (or *a* young man—he may not be the same), announcing that it is in the poet's verse that his beauty will stay immortal. There are indications of a separation and a return, a quarrel and a reconciliation; there is a hint that the relationship has lasted for three years. The young man, as the sequence proceeds, seems to be looked on as a patron no less than as a lover; a rival poet, more successful than the writer at winning the patron's favour, enters on the scene, together with a good deal of self-depreciation and contempt for his own poetry on the writer's part. The dark lady makes her appearance; first, it would seem, she was the writer's mistress, then the young man's, and by her fickleness and whorishness she poisons the relations between them. Running through these stories—we can call them that whether we look on them as fiction or autobiography—are other themes: disgust at the dirty job of being a popular playwright and an actor; bitterness at growing old, envy of other writers more up-to-date, intellectual, and highbrow; anger and disillusion with the state of society, disgust with the whole business of love and sex.

Such are the contents. The first decision which has to be made is how we are to take them: as an exercise in fictional sonneteering, such as the Elizabethans produced as from an assembly-line, or as personal and closely autobiographical. The probabilities seem overwhelmingly in favour of the latter. For one thing, there is the general "feel" of the poems; then there are the many correspondences between themes in them and in the plays of Shakespeare's middle period, that is, of round about 1600. Moreover, if Shakespeare had set out to make an objective sequence with a fictional story, he would surely have made a far better job of it, would have produced something more coherent and clearer; and it seems unlikely, since he was by the 1590's fully launched as a writer of plays, that his dramatic faculty would have wanted to express itself in another form: it was busy enough in the theatre. The Sonnets he probably regarded as a totally different kind of writing, something outside his professional career, aimed at a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

different audience. They were, perhaps, part of his early campaign to win recognition in another world from that of the London theatre, in the world of the Court, the aristocracy, and the classical highbrows who tended to despise the popular drama. The two long poems, and *Love's Labour's Lost*, are evidence of this effort; to understand it we must forget our own perception that the supreme glory of the Elizabethan age was the achievement of the London theatre, and remember that in the 1580's virtually all the forces most likely to impress and attract a young writer, almost all that was socially most glittering and culturally most imposing, regarded that theatre with a contempt both social and intellectual. The 111th sonnet expresses a self-disgusted agreement with this contempt—

O for my sake doe you with fortune chide,
The guiltie goddesse of my harmfull deeds,
That did not better for my life prouide,
Then publick meanes which publick manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receiues a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdu'd
To what it workes in, like the Dyers hand,
Pitty me then, and wish I were renu'de . . .

The image of staining shows a sense of more than intellectual degredation, of something which infects his whole being, a moral contagion. That impression is reinforced by the 110th, which makes a confession of deviations in love, of seeking (and finding) unworthy substitutes, but makes it through the image of the actor's life, the touring, self-exhibiting, posturing clown—

Alas, 'tis true, I haue gone here and there,
And made my selfe a motley to the view,
Gor'd mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most deare,
Made old offences of affections new.
Most true it is, that I haue lookt on truth
Asconce and strangely . . .

A moral degredation, it would seem to be felt as; and also a social one. The 100th sonnet is evidence of that—

Where art thou Muse that thou forgetst so long,
To speake of that which giues thee all thy might?
Spendst thou thy furie on some worthlesse songe,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Darkning thy powre to lend base subiects light.
Returne forgetfull Muse, and straight redeeme,
In gentle numbers time so idely spent.

Base and *gentle* are epithets which, in Elizabethan English, had associations far more precisely social than they have today. The Muse is being urged to return to themes not only artistically more elevating, but also socially more elevated.

II

If, then, the Sonnets derive from an episode in Shakespeare's life in which he made some sort of contact with the world of elegance and aristocracy, the next problem is to find the nature of that experience. The Sonnets, as we have said, are not a unity; the experience they present was neither simple nor single, but complex and changing. Although we have no evidence at all that the printed arrangement of the poems was Shakespeare's—no evidence, indeed, that there ever *was* an arrangement—still, one can trace a certain logical development, and the development runs from simplicity to complexity.

The early sonnets—that is, to speak more exactly, those which come first in the printed text, though it seems very likely that they were also the earliest written—show the simple sensibility of the early Renaissance in its English guise. There is a vast deal of words to very little matter; the method is that of constant variations on a single theme. The language is smooth and mellifluous,[2] the imagery clear and commonplace. Ideas are few, simple, and in a sense artificial: marry and beget children so that your beauty may outlive you, your beauty will survive your death in my verse. There is no need to think that these ideas were held insincerely, but they do come from the common stock of Renaissance poetry; they lack the force of a theme which has a particular value. Of these poems one may feel, what one could never feel of the later ones, that some other writer could have produced them.

[2]"Honey-tongued" seems to have been the stock epithet for contemporary praise of Shakespear's early writings; it is not perhaps irrelevant that when Ophelia recalls the unspoiled love of Hamlet, his romantic and chivalrous courtship of her before things went wrong, she remembers how she "suckt the musick of his hony-vowes".

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The love that these early sonnets celebrate is a simple unqualified adoration; neither it nor its object is questioned, criticised, or analysed. The object is a young man who is in no way characterised, or rendered with a sense of individual reality; he seems to be rather the ideal youth of the Renaissance, beautiful, highborn, wilful, and irresistible. He is regarded with a curious sexual ambiguity, as in the 53rd sonnet—

> *Describe* Adonis *and the counterfet,*
> *Is poorely immitated after you,*
> *On* Hellens *cheeke all art of beautie set,*
> *And you in* Grecian *tires are painted new*

—the symbols of male and female beauty being taken as interchangeable. The 20th sonnet makes that ambiguity more apparent—

> *A Womans face with natures owne hand painted,*
> *Hast thou the Master Mistris of my passion . . .*
> *And for a woman wert thou first created,*
> *Till nature as she wrought thee fell a dotinge,*
> *And by addition me of thee defeated,*
> *By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.*
> *But since she prickt thee out for womens pleasure,*
> *Mine be thy loue and thy loues vse their treasure.*

There is there, perhaps, a slight feeling of frustration, a sense that this sort of love is hardly satisfying, which comes to the surface in the wry punning jest of "prickt".[3] But in general, these first sonnets seem quite at home in the climate of Renaissance homosexual feeling, which was in part an aesthetic affectation, based perhaps on Hellenism, imitation of the Greeks, but in part a genuine emotion, compounded from love of beauty, worship of noble birth, and an elegiac tenderness for youth. The homosexual feeling that undoubtedly exists in the Sonnets has a certain unphysical remoteness; it is never explicit and aggressive, as it is in Marlowe. But then Marlowe was a tough guy and a thoroughly *mauvais sujet,* whereas Shakespeare appears to have been a respectable gentleman. There is, of course, no need to evoke the

[3]Primarily, it means "marked thee down in the list of males"—as Falstaff tells Shallow ("prick him") to mark down his recruit. But it also means, as a verb, "to copulate", and as a noun, "the penis"—as in Mercutio's jest "the bawdy hand of the dial is even upon the prick of noon". This obscene joke in the 20th sonnet seems the first appearance in the sequence of a feeling and meaning not altogether simple.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

climate of the Renaissance in order to explain how a young, middle-class, provincial poet conceived a passionate adoration for a still younger, highborn, courtly Adonis; there is no need, in fact, to go further back than Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas; but what does seem odd is this insistance that the loved one should hasten to get married. Perversion is all very well, but this is perversity. But it does at least demonstrate that the quality of this love was neither physical nor possessive.

As the sequence proceeds, the texture of the poems, though the object remains the young man, shows a slow thickening, an increasing complexity. They become much more introspective; the interest is often far more on the writer's emotions than on the object of his love or even the love itself. In the 29th sonnet, for instance ("When in disgrace with Fortune and mens eyes"), the real concentration of intensity falls on the sense of utter failure that fills the writer's being; the conclusion, which affirms that this failure is redeemed by his love, is weak and unconvincing in comparison. This pattern is followed in many others: often, the real weight of the poem, which is thoroughly pessimistic, introspective, and not at all concerned with love, is feebly opposed by the final couplet alone. Of which the most notable example is the 66th—

Tyr'd with all these for restfull death I cry,
As to behold desert a begger borne,
And needie Nothing trimd in iollitie,
And purest faith vnhappily forsworne,
And gilded honor shamefully misplast,
And maiden vertue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And arte made tung-tide by authoritie,
And Folly (Doctor-like) controuling skill,
And simple-Truth miscalde Simplicitie,
And captiue-good attending Captaine ill.
Tyr'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
Saue that to dye, I leaue my loue alone.

Many of the Sonnets, in fact, are not love-poems at all; they are poems about an all-embracing disturbance of which love was only the starting point.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Self-disgust, self-contempt, and self-reproach are the usual tones of this increasing introspection; even the rare moments of satisfaction are qualified and brushed aside at once—

Sinne of selfe-loue possesseth al mine eie,
And all my soule, and al my euery part;
And for this sinne there is no remedie,
It is so grounded inward in my heart.
Me thinkes no face so gracious is as mine,
No shape so true, no truth of such account,
And for my selfe mine owne worth do define,
As I all other in all worths surmount.
But when my glasse shewes me my selfe indeed
Beated and chopt with tand antiquitie,
Mine owne selfe loue quite contrary I read;
Selfe, so selfe louing were iniquity . . .

(Sonnet 62)

Bitterness at the thought of age, as here, is one of the points on which this all-embracing self-hatred is focussed; but another, more particular, and also it would seem more deeply felt, is the conviction of failure as a poet. This is hinted at in some of the early sonnets, for example in the 32nd—

If thou suruiue my well contented daie,
When that churle death my bones with dust shall couer
And shalt by fortune once more re-suruay
These poore rude lines of thy deceased Louer:
Compare them with the bett'ring of the time,
And though they be out-stript by euery pen,
Reserue them for my loue, not for their rime,
Exceeded by the hight of happier men . . .

—but there seems no great bitterness there: it sounds like polite and conventional modesty, and just where the failure lies is not yet defined. It is defined later, with great and bitter precision, stimulated, it seems, by the coming of the more successful rival. His own verse has got into a rut; it is now old-fashioned and monotonous—

Why is my verse so barren of new pride?
So far from variation or quicke change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new found methods, and to compounds strange?
Why write I still all one, euer the same,
And keepe inuention in a noted weed,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That euery word doth almost tel my name,
Shewing their birth, and where they did proceed?

(Sonnet 76)

The 78th sonnet particularises further; the failure is seen as a lack of artistic grace and a deficiency in learning—

In others workes thou doost but mend the stile,
And Arts with thy sweete graces graced be.
But thou art all my art, and doost aduance
As high as learning, my rude ignorance.[4]

What this sense of poetic failure means in Shakespeare's literary career, and in relation to the times, I shall investigate later.

The poems, as they proceed, then, move away from a simple and single contemplation and adoration of the young Adonis. They widen in scope, till every interest of the writer's life is brought within their reach: his dreams of social success and bitterness at social failure, the problems and rivalries of his career as an author, his perceptions of the evils and injustices in human society, his private anguish at growing old and his private fear of death. The young man is still the centre, but he too is involved in the growing complexity. For now he is looked at with a critical eye, as a fallible individual and not as a symbol that cannot be questioned—

No more bee greeu'd at that which thou hast done,
Roses haue thornes, and siluer fountaines mud,
Cloudes and eclipses staine both Moone and Sunne,
And loathsome canker liues in sweetest bud.

(Sonnet 35)

He is looked at, also, through the eyes of others—

That tongue that tells the story of thy daies,
(Making lasciuious comments on thy sport)
Cannot dispraise, but in a kind of praise,
Naming thy name, blesses an ill report.

(Sonnet 95)

He is, as it were, becoming dramatised: seen in the round, seen and felt as a human being, in the context of society and under the scrutiny of an observant though still loving mind.

When the dark lady makes her delayed but most effective entry (she does not appear till the 127th sonnet—one would almost think that Shakespeare's theatrical cunning had something to do with it), the process we have already traced continues, at a faster

[4]It is interesting to see, so early and in Shakespeare himself, a recognition of what was to become the critical commonplace: that he "wanted art" (as Jonson put it) and was unlearned,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tempo and with ever-increasing intensity. These sonnets which deal with the lady (127 to 152) contain much of the greatness, and most of the maturity, of the whole sequence; they can be taken as a single poem, in the way in which (for example) Donne's nineteen Holy Sonnets are a single poem. The lady is depicted with a familiar equality, a bitter and bawdy ferocity, such as are never accorded to the young man even at his naughtiest. His goings-on are excused and almost admired; hers are neither. Her promiscuity is described in imagery of tough and "unpoetic" realism; and this too the young man never receives—

If eyes corrupt by ouer-partiall lookes,
Be anchord in the baye where all men ride,
Why of eyes falsehood hast thou forged hookes,
Whereto the judgment of my heart is tide?
Why should my heart thinke that a seuerall plot
Which my heart knowes the wide worlds common place?[5]

(Sonnet 137)

From this perception that the lady is a whore, comes a moral tone far fiercer and deeper than anything before[6] and a far more searching self-analysis. The dominant theme is that of a self-divided personality, of a love which exists in spite of the judgment of reason, in spite of a moral perception of its wrongness and of its object's worthlessness, even (and this gives a final twist of wry self-mockery) even in spite of the senses' recognition that she is not particularly beautiful. Others do not find her so, and the others are probably right—

If that be faire whereon my false eyes dote,
What meanes the world to say it is not so?
If it be not, then loue doth well denote,
Loues eye is not so true as all mens . . .

(Sonnet 148)

There is an utter disintegration of the personality; senses, wits, and heart are at strife;[7] the whole self is at odds with the love

[5]The first of these images has an indecent pun in "ride," one of the commonest of Elizabethan verbs for describing male sexual activity; the second is derived from the contemporary enclosures of common land ("seuerall plot" meaning "privately-owned piece of land").

[6]E.g., the famous 129th sonnet on lust, and the 146th, one of the very few passages in Shakespeare explicitly and traditionally Christian, in its conflict between body and soul ("poore soul the centre of my sinfull earth"), its advice to the soul to thrive by denying the body, and its Donne-like ending—

So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And death once dead, there's no more dying then.

[7]Cf. Sonnet 141:

But my fiue wits, nor my fiue senses can
Diswade one foolish heart from seruing thee.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which it cannot resist—"when I against my selfe with thee partake".[8] It is not only self-division; it is also a perverted craving for self-deception, a deception that does not deceive. He asks to be cheated; yet of course the mere asking implies that the cheat is already detected—

If I might teach thee witte better it were,
Though not to loue, yet loue to tell me so,
As testie sick-men when their deaths be neere
No newes but health from their Phisitions know.
(Sonnet 140)

Behind this is a conviction that the whole relationship is wrong, is false in itself and founded on falsehood[9], and if that is so, then why should its details be true? This comes to a climax in what is perhaps the most terrible poem in the whole sequence, the 138th: the most terrible and also the nakedest, since it confesses things that are not easily confessed—

When my loue sweares that she is made of truth,
I do beleeue her though I know she lyes,
That she might thinke me some vntuterd youth,
Vnlearned in the worlds false subtilties.
Thus vainely thinking that she thinkes me young,
Although she knowes my dayes are past the best,
Simply I credit her false speaking tongue,
On both sides thus is simple truth supprest:
But wherefore sayes she not she is vniust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O loues best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in loue, loues not t' haue yeares told.
Therefore I lye with her, and she with me,
And in our faults by lyes we flattered be.

Of this climactic poem the last couplet, with its pun on "lye",[10]

[8]Sonnet 149.

[9]In the sonnets devoted to the lady, the words "false" or "falsehood" occur nine times. "lie" or "belied" six times.

[10]The grim seriousness of this pun is quite in the mature Shakespearean manner. Cf. the remarkable triple pun in *The Winter's Tale;* Leontes raving with jealousy to his son—

Go, play, boy, play; thy mother plays, and I
Play too, but so disgraced a part as clamour
Shall hiss me to the grave . . .

in which *play* means, first, the innocent, childish play of the boy; second, the adulterous sexual play of Leontes' wife; third, the playing of an actor, in the shameful part of the cuckold. It is worth mentioning that this 138th Sonnet is one of the two printed in *The Passionate Pilgrim*: We know, then, that "mature" though it seems, it was written by 1599.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is the very apex; the pun forces together the physical union and its context, as it were, its whole surrounding universe, of moral defilement and falsehood. It says, in fact, what the opening of the 129th sonnet says—

The expence of Spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action . . .

This love that is known to be wrong, and is yet persisted in, leads at last to a total reversal of the moral order. Good becomes bad in this love, and bad becomes good. "When all my *best* doth worship thy *defect*"[11]—"that in my minde thy *worst* all *best* exceeds"[12]—the constant equivocations of *fair* against *foul, bright* against *black*[13]—and clearest of all, the final couplet of 150—

If thy vnworthinesse raisd loue in me,
More worthy I to be belou'd of thee.

He has loved her for her unworthiness, this in turn has infected him, has made him unworthy, and hence his general moral unworthiness makes him "worthy" of her. It is, exactly, the hell that is the antipodes of the Baudelairean heaven of *Moesta et Errabunda*—

Comme vous êtes loin, paradis parfumé,
Où sous un clair azur tout n'est qu'amour et joie,
Où tout ce que l'on aime est digne d'être aimé . . .

Substitute *indigne* for *digne,* and Baudelaire's meaning would be identical with Shakespeare's.

The sonnet that follows this (151) shows a slight change of tone, a relaxing of the moral struggle; it seems to be a sardonic resigned acceptance of the utter wrongness of the whole business. It admits, in terms once again unusually religious for Shakespeare, that his love is betraying his soul—

For thou betraying me, I doe betray
My nobler part to my gross bodies treason

—but the phrases addressed to the lady, "gentle cheater" and "sweet selfe", have an air of tired and tolerant affection. Two rogues together might as well have some fun—the spirit is not unlike that of Villon in the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot*—

---

[11]Sonnet 149.

[12]Sonnet 150.

[13]E.g., Sonnet 137:

Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,
To put faire truth against so foule a face.

Which reminds one of the way the witches of *Macbeth* juggle and equivocate *fair* against *foul;* and there too the meaning is that the moral order is reversed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ie suis paillard, la paillarde me suit.
Lequel vault mieux? chascun bien s'entresuit.
L'ung l'autre vault: c'est a mau chat mau rat.

And the rest of the sonnet carries on in that spirit with an almost cheerful obscenity.[14]

III

It remains to relate the experience embodied in the Sonnets, and the quality of their poetry, to the age in which they were written and to Shakespeare's development as a whole.

The 1590's, and the early 1600's, were in all things crucial years. They were years of a crisis in some ways not dissimilar from that of our own times: years both of post-war and cold war, for the defeat of the Armada had repelled only the effort to establish a Roman Catholic regime with the aid of foreign invasion; but the fifth column of Jesuits, devoted and persistent, remained in the field. The "new philosophy" which for Donne "put all in doubt", and the sceptical, realistic, secular Machiavellianism that one sees in Marlowe, competed with Christian belief, itself divided by those competing sects, the choice between which Donne also found so difficult. The glamour of the Queen was steadily fading; the fame of the Court was being tarnished, its odour changing, from the brilliant attractiveness with which *Love's Labour's Lost* invests it, to the dark rottenness of Elsinore. There was much unemployment and widespread beggary, ruthless thrusting by new men and sinking of ancient families. The world was being created which threw up that crop of twisted, sardonic, envious railers who fill Jacobean drama: the Iagos and Edmunds and Bosolas, the heirs of dispossession and dislocation. In literature, this crisis shows itself in a general repudiation (at least by the livelier, more sensitive spirits) of the comparatively simple, idealising lyricism of earlier decades. It was in these years that there occurred that shift of feeling, change of sensibility, which marks off

[14]It is an elaborate and thoroughly Donne-like conceit on the erected penis: the final couplet—

No want of conscience hold it that I call,
Her loue, for whose dear loue I rise and fall

is exactly in the manner of the lines in Donne's 19th Elegie—

We eas'ly know
By this these Angels from an evil sprite,
Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the mature from the early Elizabethans, which changes the climate from that of *Tamburlaine* and the *Faerie Queene* to that which welcomes *Hamlet* and the poetry of Donne. At the centre of it all were a spreading and a sharpening of the critical spirit.[15] Of this the Sonnets have one notable example, the 130th ("My Mistres eyes are nothing like the Sunne"), which goes one by one through the commonplaces of the conventional love-lyrics—sun-like eyes, coral lips, snow-white breasts, rosy cheeks, perfumed breath, musical voice, goddess-like gait—and points out, in the name of reality and common sense, that they are all so much nonsense. What Shakespeare is writing here is literary satire, and what he is satirising is something very near to some of the sonnets that he himself had written in praise of the young Adonis. And there was, in fact, in these years, a tremendous outbreak of satirical writing, and of this, one of the favourite targets was the amorous sonnetteer.[16] Satire implies irony, and irony implies the ability to see two things at once; and hence we find, in this great shift of feeling, the emergence of an appreciation of incongruities, an enjoyment and exploitation of violent and surprising contrasts: the cynical and the idealistic, the commonplace and the fantastic, the grotesque and the beautiful, graveyard mortality and living sensuality. The human personality was felt as multiple: hence there is a wider relevance in that theme of self-division we have seen in the later sonnets.[17] Ambiguity of effects, uncertainty of intentions, result from this feeling; so, too, uncertainty, a doubt of what he feels and what he judges, is a keynote of the sonnets devoted to the lady. *Think* and *know* are put in opposition—

> *Thus vainely thinking that she thinkes me young,*
> *Although she knowes my dayes are past the best*
>
> (Sonnet 138)

---

[15]Cf. the line in the 38th sonnet—"if my slight Muse doe please these curious daies". *Curious* means, exactly, "critical".

[16]Cf. J. B. Leishman's introduction to his edition of the *Three Parnassus Plays* (Nicholson & Watson, 1949), in which he quotes the foolish Gullio's remark: "Oft haue I sonnetted it in the commendacions of her sqirill." And the character in Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, who boasts his ability to "write you your halfe score or your dozen of sonnets at a sitting."

[17]Cf. the great lines from Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* (probably written in the 1590's)—

> *Oh wearisome Condition of Humanity!*
> *Borne vnder one Law, to another bound:*
> *Vainely begot, and yet forbidden vanity,*
> *Created sicke, commanded to be sound:*
> *What meaneth Nature by those diuerse Lawes?*
> *Passion and Reason, selfe-diuision cause.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Why should my heart thinke that a seuerall plot,
Which my heart knowes the wide worlds common place?
(Sonnet 137)

Yet this shal I nere know but liue in doubt
(Sonnet 144)

Out of this turmoil there emerged, to give it expression, the metaphysical style, with Donne as pioneer. His love poems and satires were being written in the decade we are considering; he was its pioneer in general, but in drama the first to exploit it was Shakespeare himself, and the gravediggers' scene in *Hamlet* was its first triumphant expression on the stage. Now it is, to my mind, exactly this style that Shakespeare is referring to in that 76th Sonnet already quoted—

Why is my verse so barren of new pride?
So far from variation or quicke change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new found methods, and to compounds strange?

"New found methods" and "with the time" make it clear that it is a *new* fashion in verse that he is envying; and the references to "variation", "quicke change", and "compounds strange" give a perfect, and most perceptive, description of the metaphysical manner: its quick shifts of mood, the surprisingness and complexity of its materials and its use of them.[18] But in spite of the fantasy of its details, the bases of the new style—the foundation, for instance, of the love-poetry of Donne—were a respect for reality and a devotion to common sense. In the name of that respect and that devotion, a great deal of early Renaissance junk was cast overboard; and among it, that classical-Italianate idealising (inherited in part from the Middle Ages) of a standardised international model of feminine beauty: the goldenhaired, fair-skinned, blue-eyed lady of Spenser and Botticelli.[19] Shakespeare, in the Sonnets, is emphatic that the beauty of his lady, if beauty it be, is in a style completely modern—

---

[18]Shakespeare must surely have been a first rate critic, interested, sensitive, and analytical; this sonnet, and the 130th, and Hamlet's talk with the players, are evidence of a critical activity supremely perceptive and sane.

[19]E.g. from Spenser's *Epithalamion*—
Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre . . .
Cf. the fourth line of the 130th Sonnet, almost a parody of Spenser—
If haires be wiers, black wiers grow on her head.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the ould age blacke was not counted faire,
Or if it weare it bore not beauties name.

(Sonnet 127)

She is an individual, and her style of attractiveness is individual. She is flesh and blood—"my mistres when shee walkes treads on the ground".[20] That is exactly in the spirit and manner, the jaunty knowing commonsensical manner, of Donne—

Love's not so pure, and abstract, as they use
To say, which have no Mistresse but their Muse

—as it is, indeed, in the spirit of Iago's remark to Roderigo—"the wine shee drinkes is made of grapes".

Maturity and complexity are not attained without losses; and one finds not infrequently, in this new kind of poetry, a regretful nostalgia, a looking back to the days when women were simple and love was simple. Donne had it: it is the theme of *Loves Deity*—

Sure, they which made him (sc. Love) *god, meant not so much,*
Nor he, in his young godhead practis'd it;
But when an even flame two hearts did touch,
His office was indulgently to fit
Actives to passives. Correspondencie
Only his subject was; it cannot be
Love, till I love her, that loves mee.

But every moderne *god will needes extend . . .*

It is there in the 68th sonnet—

Thus is his cheeke the map of daies out-worne,
When beauty liu'd and dy'ed as flowers do now.

But nowadays women use make-up ("fairing the foule with Arts faulse borrow'd face"[21]) and they wear false hair ("ere beauties dead fleece another gay"[22]) and such things are the outward signs of the central fact, that love in these modern days is difficult and treacherous. There are moments in the Sonnets when the young man is almost a symbol of that lost, regretted, unreal simplicity—

[20]Sonnet 130.
[21]Sonnet 127.
[22]Sonnet 68.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When in the Chronicle of wasted time,
I see discriptions of the fairest wights,
And beautie making beautifull old rime,
In praise of Ladies dead, and louely Knights,
Then in the blazon of sweet beauties best,
Of hand, of foote, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique Pen would haue exprest
Euen such a beauty as you maister now.

(Sonnet 106)

The trappings of mediaeval chivalry were already, by the end of the sixteenth century, invested with an air of picturesque antiquity—"*old* rime", "*antique* pen"—and it is in this old world, and not in the world of today, that the young man's beauty is at home. Nostalgia for a lost past of simplicity is a theme that elsewhere in Shakespeare appears very strongly. Hamlet, for instance, envies in Fortinbras the simple decisive man of action, who can do things for childish reasons, whose values Hamlet himself can no longer subscribe to: for he criticizes even while he envies—it it is only "for an eggshell" that the hero is heroic, he finds honour "in a straw", he dies "for a fantasy, a trick of fame". Similarly, Hamlet's repudiation of Ophelia is a rejection of a simple romantic love which cannot exist in the stress of what has come later; the letter he sends her is a savage parody of that early uncritical adoration ("to the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia"); and her description of him as he was before the storm blew up, is a description of the ideal youth of the Renaissance Court, the unspoiled beauty of Castiglione's book, the Adonis of the Sonnets, in fact—"that unmatcht form and feature of blown youth".

So, too, the lady seems almost a symbol—a symbol of the opposite, of the tortured complex reality that has taken the place of the old simplicity. And the change of sex may not be irrelevant; for it seems that that half-aesthetic homosexuality, which we noted in the early sonnets, was a habit of the early, and not the mature, Elizabethans. Metaphysical love-poetry is completely heterosexual; the women it celebrates are like the lady of the Sonnets, real and individual and contemporary.

To sum up, then, it seems that the Sonnets both record and rep-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

resent the crisis in Shakespeare's life. As is probably the case with any artist whose life and work are unified, the crisis was all-involving. It was personal and amorous; it was social, and touched his professional career; it involved his art, and forced him, both as a result of it and in order to express it, into a change of style; and it was his own microcosmic reproduction of the crisis of his age. The Sonnets, as it were, are an embryo, in which the essential evolution of the whole of Shakespeare is carried out in miniature. The change that the crisis brought about in his plays is far too great, and too complex, to be dealt with here; but as far as the use of language is concerned, the change was the same, though carried to a far higher pitch, as that which we see within the Sonnets themselves, from the early and simple to the later and complex. It was a change from a use of language superficial and decorative to one that is organic and profound.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERBERT GOLD

Christmas with Larceny Coming

JEAN THOMPSON, THE ECONOMIST OF GENIUSES and other interesting people, planned a welcome-home-to-Chuck party in her recreation room. It was a celebration for both Christmas and the returned prodigal. By discussing philosophy, crime, travels, and the Town Meeting of the Air over the basement ping-pong table with its ravelly sea-green net sagging under the weight of our scrabbling fingers and deep thoughts, like Pattie Donahue's brassiere under the pressure of tugging fingers and hormones, we would not disturb Mrs. Thompson's Friday evening bridge club upstairs. They played Contract, we challenged Chuck; the same apple juice and Nut House Assorted Tasty Candy-Covered Pecans could serve us both. We gobbled; they nibbled; we all gabbled and sometimes secretly touched knees in tribute to hard cider.

The difference in age and étage, however, made a difference in quality: their grown-up love, confined to pants and panties, only occasionally hauled their knees together by a grave material affinity, while we flagrantly footsied and flirted, the thick and thin of our voices claiming: *Love me! Love me quick, somebody!* "Would you like to play table tennis?" Jean asked.

"Ping-pong? No, let's talk."

"Table tennis, anybody? Chuck?"

We felt it our duty to worship Chuck. He assented. You might say that he conducted our choir of praise, humming the themes like some bedroom maestro with his radio turned up and his mirror illumined for Chuck Toscanini the Terrific. Or like Chuck Akhnaton, the well-known Egyptian pharaoh, he nominated himself god to uplift our souls from Juicer Montague's eclectic metaphysics and Jean Thompson's assorted nuts. In some respects he resembled a mummy—the shrivelled yellow skin, the hands and head too large for a wasted body, the bottomless eye sockets of thought beyond the Nile. But his agile Adam's apple and point-making finger made him less the Styx-swimmer dog-paddling toward Coptic limbos than a high school intellectual

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intimidating the navel-eyed little girls. Ubiquitous in regenerating umbilicus, his regard a knot of fury and ambition for glory, claw-faced and scratch-mouthed, he said, "I've seen things would make your back crawl. . . . I've talked with men who would cut your throat for a plugged dime. . . . I've read books you can only get in a certain little bookstore I know about in San-Fran-cis-co, Frisco. . . ."

I listened to the avalanche of saliva rustling down Miss Eva Masters' lovely throat. I recognized danger in the fragile murmur of her lips, an alarum in the abstract flutter of her hand away from mine. My nostrils, unaccustomed to breathing fire, itched with a desire to sneeze as I mobilized myself for trouble and battle-doing.

"All right, Chuck, name one of those aforesaid books," I said.

"You were really in San Francisco, Chuck?" said Miss Eva Masters. "The Gold Coast? The cable cars?"

I sneezed. "Someone open the window," I said. "Quick, there's dust from the furnace."

"Got me a waiter on tables job on a gambling ship off the San Francisco coast," Chuck remarked in his new Western accent, "Frisco. Used to watch the lights of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Chinee junks coming over the Pacific, that Southern ocean, from China and Tanna-Touva. Rented me a tux with tails, that's the kind of mark we had. Stood on the deck like that. Sometimes used to stand and look and think for hours on end without a stop—"

"I think you mean Timbuctoo," interrupted Tom Moss the Pedant, "since Tanna-Touva has no sea coast according to my stamp collection."

"Oh not nice to call a Chinese man Chinee," said Jean Thompson, gazing significantly at me. "Chink neither, don't you think?"

"Thinking about the uncharted islands and the monsters of the deep, the treasures to be found in the frigates of old. . . ." He dreamed on a moment while we marvelled at the uncharted treasure of smoke which fumed out from his nostrils. "Have you ever heard of John Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct?*" he asked with shrivelling forehead. "I used to read it often."

Sang the words, went the music. . . .

Jean Thompson, our hostess the salon-keeper, the gracious wet-nurse, wobbled on her heeels as she offered us to eat, putting to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ours a face soft, smooth, and sleek as an ice cream cone half-licked by some methodical connoiseur, sodden with the tongue's soft preening, rich with the advertised quality of *healthy ingredients, pure shortening*. She made her investment in kindness, an economist too, a suburban coupon-clipper with her mother's mouth for boys and as much desire for them as a blunt scissors. Slack-eyed, syrup-lipped, breadsalty with hospitality, she encouraged us: "Perhaps a pecan? Oh do. No? A carry-mell? That one over there"—tipping the box. "You will always find a chart on the cover of a box of Nut House Tasty Delightfuls. It's invaluable, too." (Everyone love me, but not too much: give her a child to feed, not when she gets her certificate from Baldwin-Wallace, but *now*.)

Went the words and sang the music. . . .

Discussion ceased while we refreshed ourselves. Chuck waited with the tolerance of noble maturity for the body's petty potato-chip itchings to be gratified. "No thank you, a vegetarian," he told the cubes of white bread slippery with Bred-Spred Patty (made from the finest grade Spam livers, raised on Kellogg's Corn Flakes and ultra-violet light by white-coated attendants in pants coming neatly to a forty-five degree angle at the crotch). While upstairs the grownups dreamed of slams and discussed maids, and outside the wind whirled the fine December snow about the chinks of brick at the cornices, Chuck in the basement transcribed poems and paragraphs into a little notebook, dangerously flourishing his indelible pencil in an atmosphere redolent of ping pong, coal dust, taste-delightfuls, and intellect. I watched Eva. Eva watched Chuck through brooding lids, the hussy, curled up against the fireplace painted on the wall. Tom looked at Rosalie Fallon with the expression of a man who walks around his parked car before going on a picnic, to see that all the tires are inflated. Juicer breathed hoarsely, stared at his hands, and longed to address a deep insight to Lucille Lake. Lewis Snyder, the sheik and cynic with Dr. Jerrico's Little Wonder Grip of Steel, grinned like Humphrey B. at Stanford Leary, the clown: "Why is the Blue Boar Cafeteria a place where midgets sleep? A restrunt!" Stanford, the life of all parties, was a breezy individual, large empty spaces in his character, drafty with hooting winds.

The wind hooted outside, ominously silent in the rhetorical chimney painted behind Eva. I looked to see if she noticed my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teeth's profligate gnash, a waste of new fillings; her large soft neck only piped thoughts of Chuck down from her head past her narrow shoulders and into her organs. She dreamed of a conversation-piece built for two. She stretched like a cat, her vertebrae clicking, as he went back to cross a T. He devoured her over the ping-pong table and crossed it again.

"A taste-delightful? A bred-spred? A paper cup of something? Ohio State cider, Dan?" Jean Thompson asked. "Please do, O! Imagine, the Golden Gate Bridge!"

Went and sang, sang and went. . . .

If Eva deserted me I might search immolation, a date with Tom's Rosalie, Juicer's Lucille, or herself's Pattie. Consolation is the apocalypse! I could defeat Chuck at ping-pong and argument, deep thinking and table tennis: but the question is always love.

Words, music. . . .

Rosalie Fallon, a compressed little creature, very small, with quick hard small gestures, a piggish little nose, and pierced ears with a pearl in each, had a body morally corsetted so that it did not jiggle as its fresh weight and new flesh gave it the right to do. Tom referred to her as a *piece,* but she was a whole lump; she knew what she wanted, I believe—herself—and that is something little girls may possess only with considerable sacrifice, since before they can have any value to themselves they must be valued by others. What is mentioned as their cruelty is only the use of men as bookkeepers in the inventory.

Cute Pattie Donahue, on the other hand, possessed of a primary truth in her narrow practical brain, barbarously selected a father for her children: chose by soaring heavenwards as does the queen bee, until all drones but the strongest fall away, and then, when he finally attains her embrace, he disintegrates, dead in a spasm, while she returns dragging his ecstasy and his entrails as a plume behind her. What she wanted of him came after in the hive's collective worship. Small-pawed, desiring everything, she could feel secure only in the death of all but that which she created.

To Rosalie the others—having them, that is—provided the ends of her self's glory; to Pattie they were the means, her self-possession still the sole end. These two economists were friends (that is, allies). Rosalie had a talent for drawing pictures, espe-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cially of small plump girls. Bestial Pattie, capable of a larger arithmetic, had a talent for admiring.

Lucille Lake in all this seemed too busy to bother. Brisk, diamond-eyed, solitary but not lonely, incapable so far of all satisfactions except the imagined ones of which she was not yet capable, she too had drawn instincts of economy from the suburb-as-wetnurse. Her palate remained stiff against yea-saying, her fingers agile for harping. She hedged without commitment, murmuring "Eyewash" to Chuck. She said worse words to Juicer: "How are you, Ronald? I'm glad to see you again." Her busyness too, her abstracted fluttering in music, her long stride and her tennis, had something to do with love, but she needed a long time to imagine how. She could waste herself until ready for devotion; Pattie and Rosalie felt the contempt and fear of ants for the improvident grasshopper whose needs are metaphysical. This polite harping cricket was a grasshopper with a light, a firefly in fact.

"Congratulations on your editorship of the yearbook, Ronald!" —love and power were still the music and the words to a humming in secret behind Lucille's tawny head. She turned a trick like that.

"Who," cried Jean Thompson, having proposed table tennis and modified our digestion, "has something to say about Norman Thomas on the recent Town Meeting of the Air?"

"Me," volunteered King Chuck. "Socialists never do anything constructive. Talk is all they ever do. What we need"—and he ominously lowered his voice and took a cookie—"is a *revolution.* There's a little group in Frisco—"

"Are you may I ask," boomed Juicer, sprouting a wing collar with congressional hair on it, "a subversive communist? I'm just asking."

"That would be nice," said Jean Thompson. "Divide up everything equal. My mother buys turkeys for the poor people so they can have a nice little Christmas too, but the trouble is they spend all their money on hard drink and liquor. There you are. I don't know what to do."

"That's right, the poor people don't appreciate what you do for them," Rosalie Fallon said. "My mother says."

"I hardly know what to think next, either."—Jean Thompson.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You can never tell, though. Some are really grateful."—small-pawed Pattie Donahue, a lover of paradox.

"This is a party, eat drink and be merry. Jingle all ye bells. Why talk about that stuff"—Stanford Leary the Master of Ceremonies Manqué.

"What we need is more secret agents. Wire-tapping, espionage, foreign powers," snarled Lewis Snyder the Private Eye. "We could push the table next to the furnace and dance. Kay Kayser's on."

"Personally I'm a communist myself," murmured Tom Moss, content with the way Rosalie had winked at him. "Juicer and Dan and I are also free-thinkers and Rosicrucians, but we don't agree about the communism. Dan's a socialist. There's a big difference, they say."

"*When I was young I did frequent*. . . . Ever read the Rubaiyat? Ever read anything by Leon Trotsky the well-known Russian revolutionist?" I challenged Chuck, willing to fight it out for Eva on the ground of politics if he refused the gamut of Khayyam.

For perhaps the first time in their lives, these two agreed on something: "I think we ought to let Chuck explain himself," said Lucille Lake for reasons of coolness and reasons of order. "I think Chuck should give us the story of his life and the fruit of his experience," said Eva Masters for reasons of heat and confusion to me.

By my side Juicer pummelled the flesh of his thigh for a moribund cause. "The works of Omar, of Leon, of Tom Wolfe the great dreamer and James Branch also?" he said.

"Shush now, you Ronald Montague."—Jean Thompson the hostess. "Stop your whispering to Dan, please. It's only courtesy to the other guests, don't you understand?"

"I heard of them too," said Tom, "in addition to my Rosicrucian library of free books and pamphlets."

"They found a man on the desert all dried up and dead,"—Chuck Hastings silenced Tom. "They brought a man back to life, they rubdowned his heart,"—Juicer and I listened. "He said it was all black on the Other Side. Spiritualism, that's what it was due to."

"Sounds more like massage to me," Tom said.

"Did they have faith in Henry Ford either? Said it would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never work, that's the answer." The finger jabbed, the forehead unfolded, the words and music suffered from needle scratch. "Atheists are more honest than other people. What I tell you is God's honest truth sure as my name is Chuck Hastings. You don't have to believe me if you don't want to."

"Hiya, Harry Hastings," I whispered to Juicer.

"Shh! I'll make you sit separate." —Jean. "—ly."

"It is of little importance to me whether I am understood or not," Chuck commented. "I can wait. In San Francisco Frisco only morons don't believe in spiritualism these days. You will be sorry when the time comes." He folded his arms and bowed his head.

"Let him speak. Questions later."—Lucille.

"Tell us, Chuck."—Eva.

"Now everyone be quiet. It's Chuck's turn."—Jean Thompson. (Me green with my pipe, my arguments, and my jealousy.)

A minister's son, a scandal, a boy who was caught three times shoplifting a book by James Joyce and then used bad language in the juvenile court, Chuck Hastings gave us a sermon on his year of wrath, when he hitch-hiked to San Francisco. Let his father worry: "I'm a Nihilist too, I don't believe in graduation from high school." He denied all with the faith of an elderly clergyman, gulping like his father after a hard Sunday morning or like a fish. "I don't believe in anything. I'm sure of it," he said, his pink eyes fixing us with the blank stare of easy domination, having the strength of a failure of imagination in the exercise of mediocre energy. Those rabbity eyes needed no respite from gazing: "This is how I had my revelation that atheism is the great truth of our time, maybe greater than spiritualism. Not everyone can understand." Each of us separately felt that he was looking deep into us, this at the moment when he attempted to support his faith in the Void by a passage from Dr. Ratner's introduction to John Dewey's Human Nature and Conduct.

"Nothing exists! Life is a fraud! I only imagine you sitting there watching me, prove I'm wrong. You're just figments."

"Figment Newtons?"—Stanford Leary.

"Don't laugh, I warned you. It's a discovery I made on the gambling ship off the San Francisco skyline. I worked in a circus, too, Mills Brothers. Nothing exists, I tell you. I'm an absolute idealist and a complete Nihilist."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You're a regular dictionary," marvelled Jean Thompson, "Brittanica cyclopedia."

"You ever see anyone like that for believing in nothing?" Juicer whispered to me.

If there were a devil, I like to think I thought, *it would not be one who decided against God, but one who, in eternity, came to no decision.*

Mephistopheles Hastings waited for the murmur to subside. Beelzebub thrived on hubbub, but Hastings left no wastings of unheard words. Eva Masters sighed profoundly and hoped he appreciated her sympathetic breathiness. How he had suffered! How well the smoke curled from his nostrils! "You want to know about the little group in the back of a little bookstore in Frisco where we drank red wine and"—he paused to imply *plotted*—"planned? I mean I saw life. I mean the terror that purifies. Can they hear us upstairs?"

"A revolution in a bookstore," I said. "What you going to do if no one's interested? Where's your organization? You can't have a revolution if it's so secret no one ever heard of it. You might as well have a Yin and Yang, a Rosicrucian Club. You might as well play soft ball for Rosenblum's Bloomer Girls or the City Ice and Fuel."

A long yellow finger jabbed at my skeptical face. "You may be clever, Dan Berman," the nasal voice pronounced, "but I'm *wise*. I've seen life in the naked, the way people are." He hunched sadly over the burden of his experience: "So to speak. No one really exists." Tall, stoop-shouldered, with yellow hair tightly curled over his isosceles skill, he wore this yellowknit substance clipped short, as if a tight woollen cap had squeezed his brains into the crevices of his fish-bony nose, which jutted out full of mucus and menace. "Oh if you only knew," he murmured tolerantly, almost two years older than I, "wisdom doesn't just come from books."

"It doesn't come from talking, either. What do you think, Juicer?" I asked, a faculty committee with eyes only for Eva, on all sides of the question with only one side. "But let's talk about your Frisco revolution, if it isn't too secret to be mentioned."

"Very curious," Juicer boomed. "Interesting proposition. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is the time ripe?"—mooning over Lucille Lake. Look, Lucille, how rhythm is the rationality of music, but love the reason!

"Progress is always a revolution, my brother James says," Eva stretched and murmured. "Revolutionists sacrifice themselves for the future of mankind, don't you think?"—murmured and stretched for a yellow-haired, pointy-fingered, stoop-shouldered solipsistic future. "It's wonderful and so truly wise in the eternal sense of the word to sacrifice oneself."

Chuck was wonderful, wise, true. Journeyman pharaoh and apprentice Nazarene, a hard-worker, a Fuller Brush man of power and love, he had learned through ambitious adversity to alternate two profitable sales methods for his installment plan purchase of a personality: arrogant and aggressive with men, clinging, poetic, and wombschmerzy with women. . . . "I've suffered and I'm tired"—so that they might soften to comfort him, possess the man who destroyed the men, learn without risk of challenge the facts of their bodies which they have been boning up on in movie magazines, stroke the head and measure their own beauty, forget themselves in cunning remembrance of the dreams of their future. Having written poems of atheistic challenge to God (God never replied), having abandoned Methodism and really lived, Chuck slicked down his kinky yellow hair with water to emphasize the diabolical points and parchment gloss of his head. "Wisdom comes from being wise," he mournfully concluded. "Otherwise you can't get to be it."

Eva Masters' eyes on him said: A real genius, the genuine article. The suffering, the love of humanity, the disdain for ping-pong.

"And now for some hot chocolate!" cried Jean Thompson. "Everyone ready with marshmallow in it?" She bestowed plates and doilies along the table.

Our recreation room Shelley, nourished by Dr. Ratner's introduction, thirsted only for esteem, sans marshmallow, but a toothpick and a kiss for the teeth. Two solutions to the question of Chuck: Love and submission, scorn and struggle. I chose the second for a double reason, that Eva was hot for him and that he was stupid. The first helped me come to the second. Lost while I thought! Sunk in this empirical metaphysics as I mashed my marshmallow in grainy chocolate, I looked up only when Juicer,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a man who understood philosophy and recognized his friend's danger, said: "Say, Dan, you know what?"

Perdu!

"What?—what?—Oh, I was just thinking."

"I was just thinking too, Dan." The gentleness of my great fat Lucille-looking friend! His tact! His sacrifice in the risk of bearing tidings! "I was just thinking, Dan, maybe while we drank our chocolate we could go find Eva and Chuck and decide—"

Marshmallow foundered in my cup. Ulysses became Menelaus while an Egyptian Paris from Frisco made off with my suburban Helen. Precedents galore! Reeling with Revelation tobacco, fear squealing like a mouse in my throat, I fled from the recreation room past tray-carrying Jean Thompson, through the laundry room with washing machines opening their mouths at me and the rollers of mangles waiting like inquisitors, into the furnace room with its whitewashed walls, its puddles of coal dust, its debris of ashes, and the great organ of the furnace creaking and churning through brick and steel. Good Juicer stayed behind to suck his pipestem and meditate.

Into the dark of the hold! Into the maw of the dragon! I stumbled over a hamper of ashes and sprawled with the whitish dust choking my nostrils.

"Be careful you don't hurt yourself, Daniel," said Eva from the corner near the boiler, the pilot light its smile in an asbestos face like that of the Sphinx. Even now I recall the sweetness of her voice from her head pressed against Chuck Hastings' thin chest, loose hairs streaming over her damp forehead, hot and mussed, her mouth half-open in surprise and sleepiness and a strange new softness dreaming in her face. She was held in the hold. Her blood perhaps truer than her plans and her scheming little pupils, she said gently, "You can hurt yourself that way, Dan."

"Infectious. Those ashes from the furnace," Chuck declared in triumph.

"You want my handkerchief to wipe yourself, Dan? There's just a little in your nose."

No more St. George, no more Achilles. A poor unpretty Menelaus, I sneezed out the dust, my nose twitching and my eyes running. The red peeping mouse of fear was done with me now; only this, the gray mouse of the rejected with its skinny panting ribs and its pale working muzzle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the laundry room I found Pattie Donahue with her cup of chocolate. "Why hello, Dan. Are you looking for the Gentleman's? A sip of hot chocolate?"

Flagrant with shame, I demanded, "What are you doing here?"

"Oh, I don't like crowds. I wanted to drink my chocolate alone by myself. Here"—and she handed me the cup. "You know, Dan," she said, "I really don't like parties. Look, a tennis ball." She stretched to reach it from the shelf.

Why, oh why, Eva? Perhaps she was as eclectic as I: to test the possibilities of another, to temper love in fire, to claim the rights of freedom, perhaps even to make her father happy, having chosen a fellow hypochondriac instead of a *foreign element.* Love may find us unawares even in our joy in hate! I felt the basement vibrate with the grumble and work of the furnace. Remember the look of longing and sorrow as she stretched a white arm forward with the handkerchief I never took? Remember the gift to all men in that softening mouth? *I must understand and forgive,* went the music and the words. After all, it was an Xmas party, the X pronounced: Forgive her! forgive her!

"I write poems too," said cute Pattie Donahue, bouncing the ball and not looking at me as it went plop, plop, plop, plop.

—from a novel, entitled "Therefore Be Bold."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOSEPH FRANK

Paris Letter

AMONG THE MOST SURPRISING AND MOST STRIKING FEATURES of the modern French literary scene is the persistent and all-pervasive influence of Surrealism. By this I do not mean that Surrealist literary techniques—such as automatic writing—are still much practiced, or that the Surrealists as an organized group continue to hold the limelight, even though there is still a little band of non-entities who, as in the good old days, continue to vilify and excommunicate each other with unabated vigor and touching solemnity. On the whole, however, the man-eating monsters of Surrealism have now become quite tame, and will even nibble at tasty morsels in the hands of the public. Louis Aragon is the bulwark of French Communist journalism as the editor of *Ce Soir*. And, in recent months, he has blossomed out as the accredited defender of Socialist Realism—after some French Communist painters got a bit queasy about accepting the Stalin Prize awards (fine examples of *le style pompier,* or, as we should say, *Saturday Evening Post* cover art) as the painting of the future. André Breton, who has lost none of his old belligerency, was nonetheless recently put through his paces for the French radio public, following Paul Léautaud and Paul Claudel in a series of radio interviews used as the intermission of a regular concert series.

No, Surrealism as a movement, and the Surrealists as an indigenous group, have ceased to have any independent life; but their influence, strangely enough, seems to have increased rather than diminished. In dissolving back into the main current of French literary life, they have succeeded in giving that current one of its decisive directions. Many of the leading writers of the post-war generation—Henri Michaux, Jacques Prévert, René Char, Raymond Queneau—have all been militant Surrealists at one time or another. Even more important, Surrealism has given its tone to the entire atmosphere of the post-war period; so that writers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, who can in no sense be considered directly under Surrealist influence, are forced to define themselves in relation to the main Surrealist preoccupation—the radical revolt against the human condition on every level: social, political, literary, psychological and metaphysical.

Albert Camus's important new book, *L'homme révolté,* is entirely typical in this respect. Not only does it treat of Nietzsche, Hegel, Marx, the French Jacobins and the Russian Nihilists, but it also contains chapters on such Surrealist idols as Sade and Lautréamont and on the Surrealist movement itself. André Rousseaux, the perspicacious critic of the *Figaro littéraire,* has hailed it as "a key book marking the beginning of an epoch"; and whether one agrees

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with M. Rousseaux or not (I am inclined to believe he was a bit hasty in his prediction), there is no question that the work, which has already gone into numerous editions, is of considerable interest as a cultural symptom.

Camus, even more than Sartre, is, I think, the spokesman for the most serious part of the younger generation in France. He is certainly far less clever than Sartre, less agile dialectically, more vulnerable intellectually; but his voice has a gravity, a moral weight, a human vibration, which Sartre, for all his brilliance, is never able to attain. Camus, one feels, is primarily interested in human beings; Sartre, despite his rhetorical insistence to the contrary, is primarily interested in his philosophical system; and this gives Camus a moral authority which Sartre does not command. (Indeed, Sartre seems to be disgusted with his self-proclaimed disciples who cluster around the Existentialist *caveaus* of St. Germain des Prés, which are now little more than tourist night-spots. Last year, Sartre posted up a notice in a bookstore at the corner of the rue St. Benoît and the newly-named rue Guillaume Apollinaire, saying that the *zazous* had never read a line of his writings and had nothing to do with his ideas.)

The significance of Camus's book lies in its attempt to supersede both Surrealism and Marxism—and, though less overtly, Existentialism—as viable attitudes in face of the crisis of modern culture. In *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, Camus took as his starting point a question first asked in an early Surrealist symposium. Given a universe without values, the Surrealists wanted to know, was suicide a solution? The answer, according to Camus, is No. The unique dignity of man, as Pascal knew, is to be conscious of the absurdity of the universe, and for Camus his only possible assertion is "the maintenance of this desperate confrontation between human interrogation and the silence of the universe." Now, in *L'homme révolté*, Camus demands a reply to an equally portentous inquiry—Is murder permissible? For all forms of revolt in modern times, whether directly or indirectly, have, Camus claims, resulted in murder—either of human life, as in the concentration camps, or of some possibility of the human spirit. Is this a necessary consequence of revolt? If so, let us accept it as legitimate, since servile conformism is impossible in our time of injustice and despair. Or is murder an aberration and deformation of the true spirit of revolt, a perversion of the inescapable human longing for order and plenitude? This is the problem that Camus sets himself to answer.

Camus, to be sure, uses the word revolt in a special sense: its meaning is more metaphysical than political. And this explains why he follows the procedure—highly dubious at first glance—of linking the metaphysical revolt of Sade, Nietzsche and the Surrealists with the historical revolt of the Marxists. Marxism too pretends to furnish a human response to the question of destiny, and, so far as it does, has a metaphysical dimension. "Man in revolt," Camus writes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"is man placed before or after the sacred, and dedicated to demanding a human order in which all responses are human, that is, reasonably formulated." The essence of revolt, as Camus sees it, is the assertion of this need for a truly human order; the revolt of an individual, no matter how isolated, implicitly affirms the need of all men to a life of meaningful dignity. Revolt, thus, is an affirmation of human solidarity. Should it forget this link with human solidarity, revolt becomes revolution and betrays itself; every kind of *Realpolitik*—including the Marxist—which sets up solidarity as a goal to be conquered at the *end* of action (history) is such a betrayal. All fruitful action *within* history must have solidarity as its pre-condition.

Using this conception of revolt as a criterion, Camus cuts his way, in the first half of the book, through the tangled thickets of metaphysical protest. In a series of brief but penetrating essays (the best are on Nietzsche, Lautréamont and the Surrealist movement in general), Camus seeks to show that the inner dialectic of metaphysical revolt always terminates in nihilism. The universe, in metaphysical revolt, is either rejected as a totality, or, as with Nietzsche, affirmed with an equal lack of qualification: the result is that all values are swallowed in the abyss. For in the first case, if everything is evil, then evil itself ceases to be reprehensible; in the second, if everything must be affirmed, then evil must equally be necessary and desirable. Both possibilities of metaphysical revolt begin with a revendication of man's need for a world of justice and order; both end "in murder and lose the right to be called revolt."

Metaphysical revolt was the safety valve of the nineteenth century—and historical revolt, according to Camus, is the burden of the twentieth. Modern man, tired of protesting in vain, has now taken on himself the task of creating a world of justice and human order. The French Revolution opens this phase of revolt whose conclusion cannot yet be foreseen, though one of its immediate results is the Communist hegemony over half the world. By far the best pages devoted to historical revolt are those on the Russian Terrorists of 1905, in whom Camus finds a poignant symbol for his ideal of true revolt (he has already used this symbol in one of his plays, *Les Justes*). Even at the moment of murderous action, the Terrorists did not lose sight of human suffering; agreeing to take life as a necessity, they insisted on sacrificing their own as expiation. "Necessary and inexcusable—this is how they looked on murder." This negation and affirmation in one is the principle of true revolt. Other forms, including the Marxist, have simply negated, using as an excuse for terror and oppression the imaginary era of perfect justice that will crown the millennial society. For if totality was the principle perverting metaphysical revolt, then historicity is the diabolic agent poisoning the springs of revolutionary action. Total value will be attained at the end of history: the end justifies the means: and once again nihilism triumphs in the present.

What conclusions can be drawn from this analysis? "The only rule that is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

original today," Camus writes, is "to learn how to live and how to die, and, in order to be a man, to refuse to be a God." This, it is true, can hardly be called a revelation; nor is it very exciting, after the Russian Terrorists, to learn that democratic, trade-union action is the modern expression of true revolt. Moreover, the extensive discussion of Marxism, both theoretical and practical, often sounds like an elementary text in political theory and is certain to seem old hat to a non-French reader. Oddly enough, it is just these sections of the book that have provoked the most controversy in France. And this proves, I think, that in the present overheated French intellectual atmosphere, a draft of cooling common-sense (for this is what the positive side of Camus amounts to) is the boldest kind of originality.

Camus's blunt rejection of Soviet Communism is in sharp contrast to recent utterances of his one-time literary ally, Jean-Paul Sartre. Comparing Soviet Russia with the evils of a capitalist "society of consumption", Sartre wrote, not long ago: "In a society of the U.S.S.R. type where the supreme value is work, other myths will come into play, other rites and other hopes . . . the generosity of production, which *produces to give,* becomes the major virtue; the myth of the 'end of the world' gives way to that of the creation of the world (death conquered, artificial production of life, colonization of the stars); the Stakhanovist can work himself to death: it is not his death that will give him merit, it is his work."[1] If Sartre thinks that Soviet Russia is the only society where work is the supreme virtue, somebody should make him a present of Max Weber, or at least tell him about Calvinism; nor—though it may give Sartre a happy glow—is the privilege of working himself to death likely to seem a great consolation to the stalwart Stakhanovist. In some of our capitalist societies, where the downtrodden workers, of course, are oppressed beyond endurance, we actually have laws forbidding them from acquiring this supreme merit.

With this divergence of opinion, it is little wonder that *L'homme révolté* should have led to a sensational clash between Sartre and Camus that saw the public dissolution of their ten year old friendship. Parts of the book, it is true, had originally appeared in *Les temps modernes*; but it was quite clear, when the book was read as a whole, that Camus disagreed with Sartre not only politically but philosophically. The analysis of revolt, Camus stated, "leads at least to the suspicion that there is a human nature, as the Greeks believed, and

[1]This quotation is from Sartre's new book, *Saint Genet, Comédien et Martyr,* published in June, 1952. The work is a huge, 600-page opus ostensibly devoted to a philosophical analysis of the life and literary works of Jean Genet, self-confessed thief, blackmailer, homosexual prostitute, traitor, pro-Nazi, anti-Semite and quondam writer.

Genet was saved from a life-sentence in prison several years ago by the intervention of a group of writers, led by Jean Cocteau, and Sartre has since become one of his chief defenders and admirers. Genet's books were banned from public circulation until recently, though it was easy enough to get them at high prices under-the-counter; but now that he has become the rage of *avant-garde* literary circles, the ban has been lifted. Gallimard is publishing Genet's *Oeuvres Complètes,* and Sartre's mammoth study is the introductory volume.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contrary to the postulates of contemporary thought." Existentialism is not explicitly referred to here, but if, as the Existentialists maintain, man's essence is his existence, it follows that the idea of human nature has been emptied of significance and transformed into a purely formal concept. Man is nothing but a sum of possibilities, or, as Ortega y Gasset once put it, he has no nature—only a history. In broaching the idea of a substantial human nature, Camus is thus undermining one of the main Existentialist doctrines.

A number of months after *L'homme révolté* appeared, it was unfavorably reviewed in *Les temps modernes* by Francis Jeanson, one of Sartre's most faithful disciples. Jeanson did not deal directly with the political issues at stake, but Camus was indirectly accused of refusing to participate in history, of desiring to sacrifice the great movement of emancipation in modern times—i.e., the movement of the working-class led by the Communists—to an impossible demand for moral purity. Several months later, in the August, 1952 issue of the magazine, Camus answered this review in a letter to Sartre, which elicited an explosive reply both by Sartre and Jeanson. Sartre took Camus's coldly formal letter of protest as a personal affront, and lashed back in what is surely one of the most brutally outspoken attacks of its kind in literary history.

In his letter, Camus asked Sartre whether he agreed with Jeanson, who was indicted for deliberate bad faith in misreading the book. And if Sartre did agree, Camus asked, what became of the Existentialist emphasis on freedom? Jeanson, Camus charged, was in favor of revolting against everybody but the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Sartre's livid reply was largely personal, but he upheld Jeanson's thrust that Camus was supporting the *status quo* and betraying the cause of the working class by rejecting the Soviet Union. For Sartre and his friends, there is now no doubt that the only hope is the program of the Communist Party, however distasteful certain Communist actions may be. This does not mean that Sartre will join the CP—unless, of course, the Central Committee allows him to re-write Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. But then, Existentialism thrives on paradox; and a political position that made any sense would hardly be compatible with its tenets.

Quite aside from its value in the French context, however, I believe that *L'homme révolté* may well interest an American reader in terms of our own cultural problems. There has been a good deal of talk, in the past several years, about the "liberal imagination"; and though I have never understood precisely what this meant, I have the impression it refers to the same area of problems that Camus is concerned with. If this is so, then *L'homme révolté* is certainly one of the most penetrating and vigorous inquiries into the "liberal imagination" to have appeared up to the present. Unlike his American counterparts, Camus has not contented himself with wistful generalizations; his book explores a wide range of cultural and philosophical expression and opinion. And while he too ends up with what can only be described as a thumping affirmation of the Golden Rule,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at least Camus has squarely posed the gigantic paradox of modern times: a total amorality that springs, not from cynicism, but from a demand for total justice.

Besides, in proposing an ideal of measure and harmony for the modern world, Camus has the great merit of *not* sounding like a sophisticated version of Babbitry. Evoking, like the early Nietzsche, "la pensée solaire" of the Greeks, Camus exalts "l'esprit méditerranéen" for which Nemesis, Goddess of Measure, was a potent deity. "We shall choose," he says, "Ithaca, the faithful earth, spare and audacious thought, lucid action, the bountifulness of understanding." However intellectually unsatisfying this may be, it is no more so than a nostalgia for "manners" or for the values of a well-upholstered, middle-class, nineteenth-century society whose chief virtue seems to be that it produced great novelists to protest against its blindness and hypocrisy. Pipe-dream for pipe-dream, I prefer the Greeks. And if the time really has come to fashion an ideal of order for an American society which, God knows, is already pumped full enough of self-righteousness and self-satisfaction, let the ideal at least be Apollonian—not Victorian!

In addition to the attention given Surrealism by Camus, its continuing influence may be seen in the award of the latest Prix Goncourt to Julien Gracq for his novel, *Le rivage des Syrtes*. This is the first time, if I am not mistaken, that a prize of this importance and respectability has been given to a Surrealist; and the event was not without its comic aspects. Officially, the Surrealists are fierce opponents of all literary awards, and Gracq has published a pamphlet against the degrading commercialism of modern writing called *La littérature à l'estomac* (or: Literature to Make the Pot Boil). As a result, the Goncourt Committee never received a copy of the book. Gracq's publisher José Corti—one of the most admirable of those small, independent, publisher-bookstore owners who do so much to keep French literature lively—obeyed his wish to withhold the book, even though the award of the prize always increases sales and it was common knowledge that some committee members had praised the book highly. The upshot was that Gracq, a *lycée* professor of history in private life, won the prize without having officially submitted an entry; he disdainfully refused to accept the prize check; and Corti heroically refrained from putting the customary band around copies of the book stating it had won the prize, though other bookstores took care of this chore by posting hand-written notices in their window. So poor Gracq, all unwillingly, was dragged into the literary marketplace. And though I do not mean to impugn his good faith, I could not help thinking that, as with Greta Garbo, a pronounced aversion to publicity is often the surest path to notoriety. For Gracq would not have made half as good newspaper copy if he had accepted the award gracefully; nor would he really have been inconsistent in doing so. An author who wishes to preserve his purity has a simple and efficient method—he need not publish at all. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

once he voluntarily submits himself, by publication, to public judgment, I see no reason why he should behave like an outraged virgin when the public takes notice of what is surely a provocative display of charms.

Hitherto, the Surrealist novel has either been, like André Breton's *Nadja,* a lyrically rhapsodic account of certain private experiences, or, as in Louis Aragon's *Le paysan de Paris,* an equally subjective effort to transform the most commonplace reality (a walk through Paris) into the marvellous and the mythical. Gracq's first two novels—*Au château d'Argol* and *Un beau ténébreux*—were already a bit closer to non-Surrealist experiences; in the latter, as Yves Duplessis remarks in a useful introduction to Surrealism, "Gracq evokes, in romantic pages, man's aspirations towards a superior being, which become stifled as the difficulties of life efface childhood reveries." Even here, though, the reference is still personal and individual; the quest for a superior being (Gracq admits to being much taken with Wagner and the Grail legends) remains a private matter. What is striking—and, in the light of Camus's warning about nihilism, somewhat frightening—about *Le rivage des Syrtes* is to see the Surrealist desire to plunge into the unknown projected in large-scale social terms.

The story is told by a young nobleman of a vaguely Italianate country, which, like Venice, after a glorious and triumphal period, has sunk into the torpid lethargy of senescence. At the height of its power, three hundred years before, it had engaged in a brief war with a neighboring country on an adjoining coast. Hostilities had never been officially terminated; but after the first flareup no further action had taken place and all contact between the two powers had ceased. This twilight state of centuries-old peacefulness is described, throughout the book, by images of decay and stagnation. Conversely, the narrator's desire for adventure, his restless longing to strike out beyond the bounds of the permissible and the knowable, is always conveyed by images of vitality and rebirth. Finally, the narrator sails a patrol-boat into the harbor of the mysterious enemy country. No damage is done, but this act releases a chain of events leading to a resumption of hostilities that the head of the Seigneurie—the Council of State—refuses to stop. For this enigmatic personage had consciously, even if indirectly, inspired the fatal patrol; he too, it seems, overcome by the decrepitude of peace, wishes to plunge himself and the State into Life and the Great Adventure (Gracq and the Surrealists have a great fondness for capital letters).

The book is composed in an elaborately sumptuous rhetoric which, to an English reader, often recalls the narratives of Walter Pater; and though Gracq unquestionably has great evocative gifts, I finally found the long, descriptive passages something of a bore. It may be that Gracq's allegorical framework unduly limits the range of his descriptive symbolism; or perhaps he lacks the inventive capacity to give the needed variation. Whatever the reason, the piling up of atmospheric effect becomes tediously repetitious. The action, slight enough at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

best, is motivated by metaphysical urgencies and poetic apprehensions; the characters give the effect of talking to each other from great distances in very low voices; and I was reminded of those complicated adventure movies in which nobody ever asks an obvious question or performs a sensible action—because, if someone did, the whole shebang would evaporate in embarrassed laughter. In other words, I found it impossible to remain indefinitely under the Surrealist spell; nor do I think this is unfair to the book. Gracq, after all, chose to develop his theme in social terms—the narrative involves not only an individual but the life of a community—and the reader is irresistibly impelled to apply social norms to the events he describes.

Once this is done, of course, the result is disastrous. That Gracq himself was aware of the problem is shown by a curious passage, where the narrator, who tells the story after the events have taken place, stops to reflect on the consequences of his fateful patrol. He speaks of "the veil of nightmare that rises for me from the glowing embers of my destroyed country"; refers to his "detestable history"; and seeks, "for lack of a justification that can nowhere be found, at least a pretext to ennoble an exemplary misfortune." And it is instructive to see what pretext he finds. Figures like himself, he says, are the "*damned souls*" of a people; "the half-religious terror which makes them greater than nature derives from the revelation, of which they are the vehicle, that at any instant a condenser may intervene through which millions of scattered and secret desires monstrously objectify themselves as will-power; . . . the fascination they exercise comes from the suspicion that the privileged communication granted them—even if for the worst—has elevated them, for some seconds that compensate the burden of *being*, to the supreme solicitation of life." Here, at least, Gracq recognizes the possibility that the "supreme solicitation of life", symbolized by war, might be "for the worst"; but this passage is the only one of its kind. Elsewhere, the "supreme solicitation of life" is always equated with rejuvenation; the unwillingness to respond to the solicitation, with death. Meaningless destruction is thus glorified as the culmination of human destiny, and Gracq can take pride in being a faithful disciple of the André Breton who once wrote: "The simplest Surrealist act is to go into the street, revolver in hand, and shoot at random into the crowd."

One of the great advantages of Surrealism as a literary movement is that, like the Catholic Church, it can be all things to all men. Two writers more dissimilar than Julien Gracq and Raymond Queneau could hardly be imagined; yet both have their roots in Surrealism. Gracq comes from the lyrical-poetic side of Surrealism, which, in its preoccupation with the marvellous and the mythical, has completed the work begun in the early nineteeth century by the Romantic Movement. Queneau, on the other hand, stems from the Surrealist exploitation of the incongruous, the grotesque and the ridiculous to disorient the accustomed perspectives of everyday reality. Antonin Artaud—a highly gifted actor and writer, who died in a mental hospital some years ago after living

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Surrealism to the hilt—once wrote that the essence of Surrealism was expressed by none other than the Marx Brothers. There is, he said, "a particular magic that the accustomed relations of words and images do not ordinarily reveal; and if there is a characteristic state, a distinct degree of the poetic spirit that may be called Surrealism, *Animal Crackers* is entirely pervaded by it." Something of this Marx Brothers atmosphere is incontestably captured in Raymond Queneau's novels. Everything happens in his books with the same freedom of total irrelevancy; and in a prose as lowdown and racy as a Groucho wisecrack, the sublime significance of the nonsensical is triumphantly demonstrated.

Raymond Queneau might very well be a character from one of his own novels. The protagonist of his latest novel, *Le dimanche de la vie*, finds it equally easy, and equally natural, to be a soldier in Madagascar, a seller of photograph frames in Paris, and a phony female fortune-teller who dazzles his customers with the gossip picked up in local *cafés*. Similarly, Queneau himself is an editor of Gallimard's and a member of the Académie Goncourt; a student of mathematics and philosophy who has edited Alexander Kojève's *Introduction à la lecture d'Hegel*—a work compiled from lectures at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes and one of the most influential books in post-war French thought; a popular *chansonnier* and frequenter of St. Germain des Prés *bistros* and *caveaus;* a punster on a gigantic scale, whose mock-heroic epic poem on the creation of the world, *Petite Cosmogonie Portative*, recalls *Finnegans Wake* for scientific erudition and linguistic complexity; and finally, the happy-go-lucky novelist, who, perhaps more than any other French writer, has gotten the living language into his books—and, with the language, the warmth, the humanity, and the shrewd moral (or immoral) realism of the people who speak it.

It is really very difficult to explain what a Queneau novel is *about*, largely because nothing that happens ever makes any sense. Queneau's world is just as cockeyed as that of the early Evelyn Waugh, and there is equally little point in dwelling on its external features. Valentin Brû, Queneau's hero, marries a small shopkeeper who decides that he's her man when she sees him, still in the Army, walking past her shop-window every day in military splendor. But first, of course, she must discover who he is (which requires her sister to sleep with the captain in charge of information), and then there is the honeymoon—which Valentin takes alone because, as any fool knows, you can't afford to shut up shop just when business is good. Valentin drifts through life in this delightfully casual fashion, acting by an immutable logic of his own that it is as impossible to dislike as to describe. "It's the Sunday of life"—we read in an epigraph at the beginning of the book—"which levels everything and banishes everything bad; men endowed with such good humor can't be completely bad or vile." This is taken from Hegel, appropriately enough, and it can be used to describe Queneau's emotional tone: life is always Sunday, even if nobody ever goes to church. Queneau's danger is a Damon Runyon cuteness always lurking round the corner; and in *Le dimanche*, which is a trifle per-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

functory when compared with his earlier books, he skirts perilously close to this fatal quagmire. But so far, the pitiless frankness of French self-scrutiny, and the down-to-earth bawdiness of French lower-class life, have saved Queneau from sentimental bathos.

Minor though it may be, however, *Le dimanche* is filled with excellent touches and written with magnificent verve. In a typical scene, at a solemn family dinner, Valentin refuses to partake of the oysters that everyone else is busy guzzling because, as he carefully explains, they are live creatures. This horrifies the assembled cannibals, but his wife Julia is quick to riposte: "Chez tous les écaillers convenables, ça s'appelle des fruits de mer." Naturally, *fruits* can't be *animals!* But Valentin sticks to his guns, and the oysters are only consumed after Julia, with an overwhelming display of French logic, proves that if they remained uneaten they should only suffer longer—and die eventually anyway. Humanitarian motives triumph, to the great relief of the unhappy feasters. And the last glimpse we get of Valentin, in the midst of the confusion and chaos of the French defeat, is at a railway station, helping two girls in shorts climb through the train windows to get a seat. Julia knows that Valentin is well-intentioned, but she understands him (and herself) too well to have any illusions; Valentin's gestures are prompted by more than charity. Just what *does* prompt Queneau's heroes is not easy to express shortly; in a recent issue of *Critique,* Queneau's friend Alexander Kojève (who has abandoned philosophy for politics, and is reputed to be the author of the Schuman Plan) wrote an article maintaining that the heroes of Queneau's last three novels were embodiments of true philosophical *sagesse.* I noted the words Being and Non-Being appearing in the course of the discussion, and I should not swear that Queneau's books do not contain some such deep and devious theme; on the contrary, I am sure they do. But for the moment, I should like to do nothing more ambitious than register my delight at his irresistible drollery.

The last writer I wish to mention, Valéry Larbaud, has nothing to do with Surrealism, but there are several good reasons why he is worth a couple of paragraphs. For one thing, he was awarded the *Grand Prix National des Lettres* for 1952; for another, a new generation of Americans may well grow up thinking that he is a myth. In her book on William Carlos Williams, Vivienne Koch has a self-confident footnote asserting that "Valéry Larbaud is Paul Valéry." I do not know how Miss Koch arrived at this conclusion, but I should like, formally and officially, to tell her that it isn't so. Valéry Larbaud is *not* Paul Valéry, and if he were, Miss Koch would have uncovered the greatest literary hoax of the century. But Paul Valéry is dead and Valéry Larbaud very much alive (though in bad health), and the award to him this year was belated recognition for an eminent *homme de lettres* who, if not a major writer, has been a stimulating and valuable force in French letters for at least thirty years.

If Larbaud is known at all to Anglo-American readers, he is likely to be recalled as the friend of James Joyce—the writer who, with Joyce's aid, wrote

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the first essay making *Ulysses* comprehensible. Larbaud was also, along with André Gide and Jean Schlumberger, one of the founders of the *Nouvelle Revue Française;* and he is the author of numerous books of fiction, poetry and criticism. His most ambitious creative work is a novel in the form of a diary, *A. O. Barnabooth,* which, when it appeared in the middle twenties, created a considerable stir. I can remember, years ago, picking up a second-hand copy in English; and the prize might well be the occasion for a welcome re-issue. On a recent re-reading of the original, however, I must confess that I found it rather thin. Larbaud is a wonderful *paysagiste* and an excellent raconteur; his imaginary diary of a fabulously wealthy young South American, who trails his ennui through some of the lesser-known capitals of Europe, is charming reading; but the moral problems of the millionaire are not a European theme. F. Scott Fitzgerald, who may have known Larbaud's work, does this kind of thing far more effectively. Nor can Larbaud's book compare, either in depth or intensity, with Gide's *Les nourritures terrestres,* also a semi-poetic prose work about a *disponible* young man on a voyage of self-discovery through exotic landscapes. Larbaud's less ambitious short stories, however, are certainly among the finest in modern French writing—sensitive and completely successful performances, many in a stream-of-consciousness technique, by a highly civilized writer of flawless tact and discrimination.

On the whole, though, the general esteem in which Larbaud is held, and the undoubted influence he has had on modern French writing, may well be mainly the result of his critical labors. As a critic, Larbaud combines a love for the recondite and an international culture with a welcome freedom from pompousness or pedantry. If that much-abused word humanist still has any meaning, he can rightly claim its honors for himself. William Carlos Williams, in *In The American Grain,* has recorded a conversation with Larbaud about Cotton Mather, whose writings Larbaud had read; and he is equally familiar with other out-of-the-way corners in Western literature. For years he reviewed Spanish and South American books for the *NRF,* not to mention a constant activity as translator and re-discoverer of forgotten French literary figures. Some of the feeling behind Larbaud's critical activity may be caught in a passage from *Barnabooth,* which I am certain expresses one of his own deepest experiences. "Words . . . at each new word I learned, I felt that I had filed down a little further the bars of my prison. I loved those words; I absorbed their life. Sometimes, I didn't know exactly how they were pronounced—but I treasured them in my heart letter by letter. Understand, it wasn't only *Wilhelm Meister,* nor even German literature and philosophy; it was a training of the spirit, how shall I express it?—the contact with other spirits, the gates of the world of culture finally forced." Larbaud's critical writings are truly the vital contact of one spirit with another; and they are likely to remain, as a source not only of information, but also of enlightenment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM BECKER

Broadway Letter

IT HAS BEEN RUMORED THAT since the opening of the Barrault troupe at the Ziegfeld, some fifteen separate proposals for a repertory theatre on Broadway have been advanced. Yet there is nothing to substantiate even a hope that such proposals can now represent anything real. On the contrary, the observable forces of Broadway, both economic and artistic, continue to push in precisely the opposite direction; and it seems highly likely that these rumors testify only to meaningless twinges of conscience that will pass. For against any vague dream of repertory, one has to oppose several precise facts. One is that the two existing organizations in New York out of which repertory might have emerged are both defunct as of the beginning of this season. These are the City Center and ANTA. Both, after flirting with the idea of establishing a more or less permanent acting company, have now cancelled their play seasons altogether.[1] City Center remains as a producer of opera and ballet; ANTA remains chiefly as a cluttered assortment of overbearing, ineffectual, theatre-struck old frumps, performing what might with charity be called an "information service". These "ANTA ladies" may be identified as standing in the same relation to the working life of Broadway as Cummings' "Cambridge ladies" stood in relation to the professional life of Harvard. And the result is that ANTA has become just another worthless income-tax deduction, quite dead and pathetically unburied, the latest victim of the Broadway Intelligentsia's starry-eyed opportunism, of their idealism bereft of ideas.

Another fact is that there is no activity in evidence on Broadway which a theatre given over to repertory could exploit. By its very nature repertory can only be erected on the twin foundation of a relatively definable vision of theatre and a group of talented, trained people who share that vision. Nothing useful can possibly come of any scheme based solely on the view that repertory would be a good thing; for the mere notion that a proper life for theatre in general somehow involves repertory may be true, but it is not practically useful; it is at best an impressive abstraction, not a viable idea. A repertory of what, by what, for what? These are the relevant questions to which some precise, even if partial, answers must begin to appear before any talk of repertory can be taken seriously.

Furthermore, so far from displaying any definable groups that might cohere

[1]As the magazine went to press, it was announced that City Center would resume its play season in February. George Schaefer, Maurice Evans' protégé, has resigned. He has been replaced by Albert Marre, who headed the Brattle Theatre in Cambridge until its recent demise. Mr. Marre plans to gather a permanent nucleus of actors at the Center with name stars brought in for leading roles—not an ideal plan, but perhaps a right beginning.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into permanent companies, Broadway is tending more and more toward a total incoherence of effort which seems already to have returned us the ills of the star-system with none of its very considerable benefits. Under the old star-system, the producer was at the mercy of the stars themselves (so much so that the positions were often coalesced in the actor-manager) and of their ambitions to appear in the traditionally great roles. Since the stars had large personal followings, this situation impelled theatre-going as a habit, and gave a sure, if often distorted, life to theatrical classics. But today the stars are at the mercy of the producer's wildly vain conviction that the theatre can be kept healthy only by monstrous infusions of new drama, with the result that we no longer have great stars exploiting great plays to make theatrical history, but very poor plays exploiting the stars to stay on the boards at all. And this has in turn produced the further result of making the stars themselves less bright for having to shine through so much dim fugg. The only reasonable solution to this situation of course is that producers should abandon their impossible demands for new plays, and relax in the comfortable knowledge that there is a vast unused repertoire of drama to be had royalty-free at the nearest public library. But this solution is clearly too simple to be appropriate to the feverish, compulsive business that staging plays has become; and it will not at the moment do to point out that the handful of poor plays which get performed every season are slowly eliminating theatre-going as a habit, wearying audiences to the point of absolute dullness (having long ago reduced the daily critics to cretinous automatons), and allowing the artistic resources of the theatre—actors, directors, designers—to lose grip on their crafts by insisting that they supply everything while offering them nothing (not even fame or much money both of which at least they can get from the movies) in return.

I

All this is especially noticeable this season with regard to actresses. For among the presentations which have lasted a reasonable time, at least five were clearly intended to be show-pieces for outstanding female performers. The effect has been to throw the art of performance into such sharp relief that one finds oneself more and more attending to dramatic events as if they were poor ballets or routine circus stunts, caring hardly at all for what is being done, but watching with a peculiar and abstracted fascination the mimetic means of the lead performers. Now it would be idle to pretend that this is a satisfactory theatrical rapport for the audience; it clearly is not; but the circumstance does have certain (somewhat warped) virtues. It does tend, for example, to show in a very exact way what the art of the performer is or could be, and to what degree that art can and cannot have an appealing existence apart from the literary soul of theatre. And it likewise can demonstrate for the would-be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

theatre writer how the fact of performance *essentially* affects dramatic form—a perception from which contemporary Broadway playwrights now chiefly writing novels manqué for the stage would do well to profit.

This last point ought to have been made clear by the *Evening with Beatrice Lillie* at the Booth, precisely because Miss Lillie's is the one outright performance on Broadway which does not aspire or pretend to be anything else. For the evening is not a play, not even a consistent series of sketches (like Cornelia Otis Skinner's *Paris '90* last year), but a haphazard potpourri of famous skits and songs from Miss Lillie's previous revues. It is quite simply a night-club evening transferred to the stage, and even as such it is the most satisfying and instructive piece of theatre to be had anywhere on Broadway (the imports, for the moment, apart). Some of the material is extremely poor in the writing; none of it is highly original or imaginative in conception; but all of it is magnificently transformed into theatre. All of it has a total dependence on Miss Lillie's theatrical technique; and that technique is very worth observing. For it is a perfect example of what Bertolt Brecht has called the *Verfremdungs-effekt* (usually translated "alienation-effect") in acting. Miss Lillie is perfectly cool and relaxed in performance; she does not identify her persona with the subjects of her portraits, but is constantly suggesting the presence of a private personality behind and apart from the personalities of her subjects. This is not to say that she reveals her own personality as such (that would merely be incomplete acting), only that she does consistently manage to indicate that it is there. Her control is alway obvious, the calculation of effect is never concealed; in fact, an important portion of the effects themselves consists in a revelation of their calculated nature. Thus Miss Lillie does not represent her subjects so much as she presents them; and the effect of course is to impel an understanding of the performance *as a performance*, and so to minimize the importance of her poor material. (Here a comparison with Reginald Gardner, Miss Lillie's partner, is useful: for he tends to reveal his own personality, not hold it in half-shadow as a controlling commentary; he is less relaxed, more stagey, and wholly dependent on the script: hence his only amusing sketches are two zany pantomimes, one of a singer, the other of an orchestra conductor, with recorded sound coming over the loudspeaker.) For although Miss Lillie's art is sophisticated in the modern sense of being usually risqué, it is actually very primitive in its dramatic values. The words she uses have only a minor importance and sometimes no importance at all, except insofar as she gives them a special meaning through gestures of voice or body that shade or contradict their sense, or suggest some double-entendre even when none is there. Thus in the songs the words are mere adjuncts to a manner, and in the sketches they operate merely as one device (with rather less importance than her gestural devices) in the presented action. She almost never depends on gags, that is, verbal comedy, but on the comedy implicit in an active situation; her words

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

signify this situation and no more: they do not describe it, and they have no life whatever apart from the performance. Now this is not to say that Miss Lillie can make poor words or poor conceptions perform as well as good ones might; that she cannot is the one crucial limitation of the evening; and her work would be as much improved by collaboration with a brilliant writer as such a writer could be benefitted by the possibilities she shows. In fact, in Brechtian theatre the *verfremdungseffekt* is used precisely to call attention to the material, not as here to render it relatively unimportant, and this is the prime secret of the rich theatrical reality which Brecht achieves. But for us Miss Lillie's work does demonstrate an essential relation of words to drama (as opposed to the novel), and what it has to teach playwrights is a conception of dramatic action rooted in the event—what Brecht calls the *vorgang*—the absence of which is the most notorious deficiency (aside from intellect) in nearly all contemporary Broadway plays.

That identification of the performer with the performed which Miss Lillie so perfectly eschews is of course a cardinal principle of the received methods of acting on Broadway, and it is almost impossible to discuss adequately any individual Broadway performance without reference to it. It is the general substance of the (Stanislavsky-orginated) "Method" which is taught at all the better acting schools and studios in New York; as a concept it lies at the root of the entire vocabulary which is used to discuss acting among professionals; as a doctrine it has become firmly established and is largely unquestioned. And while, as Brecht has shown, the most devastating objections can be brought against it as a total theory or dogma, it does have enough real relevance to the art of acting to make it a useful critical tool in distinguishing between various kinds and degrees of performance. An equally useful and not unrelated distinction is that which Yeats used to make between actresses who proceed via "personality" and those who proceed via "character".

Shirley Booth, for example, who stars in *The Time of the Cuckoo* at the Empire, is an actress who seems definable largely in terms of "personality", though she is not by any means an extreme or exclusive example of the type. In a play about a lonely, middleaged American woman in Italy, whose typically American frustrations, longings, and warped values spoil the attempt of an Italian (whom she actually desires) to have an affair with her, Miss Booth gives a performance that is easy-going, confident, thoroughly naturalistic, but quite uncraftsmanlike. She seems to work out of a somewhat naive identification, which is to say, an incomplete one; and the appealing force behind this work is simply a certain charm of personality. In this respect she is reminiscent of Helen Hayes, but with a difference. For Miss Booth's confidence is calm and unassuming, where Miss Hayes' is ordinarily truculent; Miss Booth exercises her personality on her fellow actors in behalf of the play, where Miss Hayes exercises hers on the audience in behalf of a private vanity. Yet they are alike

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in seeming to come by their performances in an instinctive, unstudied, easy way; and it is this very ease which accounts for much of their charm. It must also make them extremely difficult for directors to control, simply because so much of what they do is haphazard and unconscious. Miss Booth reveals her want of craftsmanship most conspicuously in her gestures, which tend to be meaningless, unconsidered tics of the moment, neglected by-products of the general performance. Her movements—the twisting of a scarf or the careless flick of a wrist—are in fact nervous without representing nervousness, natural without being appropriate, and they therefore have the monotony and insignificance of the ordinary, unnecessary gestures of real life. It was probably this total technical reliance on her own personality that resulted in what seemed an important misreading of the meaning of her role. For the text and the occasion of the play seemed to indicate that the author had imagined not the sympathetic creature whom Miss Booth represented, but one whose very frustrations had turned her somewhat sour and unpleasant, and produced a real undercurrent of viciousness beneath her exterior charm. A director does what he can with "personality" actresses, and Harold Clurman, who is probably the most dependable, conscientious, and sensitive director now on Broadway, apparently could not do much. One should note that it is recurring circumstances of just this sort that have created the "type-casting" which actors always profess to deplore without seeming to realize that the only available antidote for it is a developing consciousness of craftsmanship on the part of the actors themselves.

On the other hand, the purely craftsmanlike actress has her own special difficulties on Broadway, particularly where the plays are most trivial or incompetent. An example of this was Uta Hagen's recent performance in *In Any Language,* a play about a Hollywood musical comedy star trying to make her way as a serious actress under a Rosselini-type director in Rome. (Since plays on Broadway don't have real plots any more, they can usually only be described as being *about* something.) Unlike Miss Booth, Miss Hagen works hard for every effect that she gets; her performances are built up out of the most careful observation and are ordinarily under the fullest control. But in this case Miss Hagen was simply miscast, and to say that implies her one undeniable limitation. For she is not an actress who can be defined in terms of "personality"; she does not even lend herself to description along those lines; she cannot rely on glamor; she is not, in short, cut out for the virtuoso performance imposed on a poor role. To put this limitation in its fairest light would be to say that Miss Hagen's work is simply too honest and too thorough for that. She is the sort of actress who would be highly prized as a leading member of some permanent company, where her talents could be employed continuously and appropriately in plays capable of exploiting her very integrity. But as a glittering patina for shabby nonsense, she won't do; she doesn't cover; and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nonsense is continually showing through. Such a limitation of course puts her at a distinct disadvantage on Broadway, and makes her a pertinent example of the kind of actress which Broadway in its present state can only rarely afford to support; conversely it establishes her as the sort around which a really vital traditional theatre could be built. Betty Hutton could perhaps have saved *In Any Language*; Miss Hagen could not; and until the illusion that such plays are worth saving is broken, it seems likely that talents like Miss Hagen's will remain, as they are now, largely wasted.

Another common way to waste talent on Broadway is to soak it up in roles that demand by way of performance only a single, monotonous, one-dimensional dramatic gesture. Such was the case with Margaret Sullavan's performance in the new (and hopelessly trite) Terence Rattigan play, *The Deep Blue Sea*. It was actually quite impossible to perceive, much less to judge, anything of Miss Sullavan's mimetic technique. The role offered her nothing to do, no development, no nuance to suggest. It began and ended as a static portrait of a neurotic woman who had left her wealthy, respectable, eminent and rather older husband for a life with a thoroughly uncomplicated, heavy-drinking, sportive, ex-RAF pilot. The plot, such as it was, revolved around her will to suicide and her lover's inability to find himself either with regard to her or to civilian life. Miss Sullavan provided just what the role required, and nothing could have been easier, for it was not so much acting as it was a sustained expression of neurasthenic hysteria, very realistic, but also very boring. And of course, as all such expressions require, Miss Sullavan's identification with her role was complete. Thus there was never any sense of achieved craft to provoke admiration or joy in the performance as such, and the evening remained (with the exception of occasional fine moments by James Hanley as her lover) a thoroughly dismal affair.

The four performances so far mentioned have had in common a sound foundation in ability combined with a genuinely professional veneer. Their shortcomings were evidence not so much of deficiencies in talent as of the misuse or neglect or corruption of it. And even though the concern so far has been for performance alone in an effort to unveil values of *some* interest in a profligate season, it should not be forgotten that there is also such a thing as over-performance, or rather the unmitigated exhibitionism of the essentially untalented (assuming that a sense of proportion and appropriateness is one of the ingredients of talent). This not-so-rare theatrical disease (it appears in fact to be endemic among movie stars who return to the stage) was never so clearly demonstrated as in Katherine Hepburn's wildly amateurish exhibition at the Shubert, for which Shaw's *The Millionairess* provided the occasion. Now Shaw's play, which is an attempt to define dramatically the nature of the born boss, actually should occasion some highly caricatured performances—preferably along Brechtian lines (Shaw himself mentions Jonson's comedy of humours in the Preface).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But so far from being a caricature, Miss Hepburn's performance was a hyperbolic parody of the extroverted summer-stock apprentice whapping hysterically away at her first big role. Her mumbling and stumbling, her striding and shouting, her flung body and her waving arms, her phoney accent, and her arbitrary stresses on the wrong words, her ghastly delivery like a hopped-up parrot imitating a stuck machine-gun—but description won't do: it has to be seen to be believed. And of course once these incredible crudities had been indelibly pasted over the play, the critics (and most of the public) piously concluded that poor old Shaw had got senile before writing it. The fact is that Shaw, having survived the onslaughts of Margaret Webster and Maurice Evans (under the supervision of Lawrence Langner) has finally been utterly and irretrievably vanquished: never let it be said that the tiniest evidence of his intellect or his dramatic genius remained to provoke anyone at the Sam S. Shubert Theatre.

II

So much for the indigenous life of Broadway; and one acknowledges with a real sense of despair that the only unqualifiedly interesting theatre available has been imported from Europe: the Greek National Theatre from Athens, and the Jean-Louis Barrault-Madeleine Renaud company from Paris.

It was obviously impossible, when the language spoken was totally incomprehensible, to judge the Greek performances—of two Sophoclean tragedies in modern Greek translation—with any genuine conviction. Not of course that this deterred the Broadway critics: Brooks Atkinson's eulogy actually proposed that although the Greek classics are unutterably boring in English, they somehow become miraculously moving if given in modern Greek which nobody understands. Silly on the face of it, such a view becomes outrightly preposterous if one considers the degree to which these productions were designed to throw everything to the language. For that was the one most evident observable fact. The productions themselves were spare and ascetic, with a minimum of spectacle (Aristotle ranks spectacle last among the parts of tragedy), and no evident direction of the principals. A full-sized chorus was used which chanted and sang in unison, and moved about the stage in vague patterns with a kind of semi-choreographed slithering. But having the advantage of continuous performance in a national theatre, the chorus was drilled in its effects to a high degree of precision; and the most startling fact for a foreign ear was that each single syllable was clearly articulated and could be precisely distinguished. That, in itself, was a major achievement; and since language is, in fact, the chief dramatic substance of Greek tragedy, this emphasis was exactly right. But, in the present circumstances, it unavoidably conspired to produce lengthy periods of tedium for all but the Atkinsonians and the Greeks in the audience.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Moreover, beyond this general simplicity of approach, the productions were not, so far as one could tell, outstandingly distinguished. As Electra, Katina Paxinou gave a performance reminiscent in many externals of Judith Anderson: she ranted and postured, clutched at herself, climbed the steps with stumbling jerks, arched herself affectedly against the doorway, and often seemed on the verge of a general vulgarity very like Miss Anderson's. Moreover, there was no evident alteration in pitch from beginning to end. And, most upsetting of all, there was never the least indication in Miss Paxinou's appearance or performance of Electra's youth, which is surely the most poignant dramatic ingredient in the opening laments. As for Alexis Minotis' portrayal, in *Oedipus the King*, it simply seemed pale and without stature. It offered nothing to the eye, and hence, since his speaking could not be communicative, very little by way of performance was conveyed at all.

Yet I am aware that these criticisms may be highly unjust; I am also aware that much of the disappointment occasioned by the Greek National Theatre had more to do with the general circumstances of the venture than with the productions as such. It was inescapably depressing to consider that in order to see Greek drama at all one had to see it performed by Greeks in modern Greek translation. It was doubly depressing to notice that most of Broadway was not only complacent but overjoyed at the fact; for the appearance of the Greeks happened to suit exactly that uncritical internationalism which has become the newest party line of the Broadway Intelligentsia. Amid all the ballyhoo about international understanding through the supreme agent of (untranslated) art (in comparison to which, said Brooks Atkinson, "politics is a low form of barter") not one word has been said of classical activities in America. Broadway's ignorance of the important activity of translation now under way, not to mention its indifference, is a critical example of our missing theatrical milieu. For what theatre that expects to sustain itself at all can afford to ignore the fortuitous appearance of half a dozen Greek scholars who are also poets, writers, and critics of stature? A living theatre, as I have insisted before, depends for its very life on exploiting every immediate cultural resource available to it; and these projects in the translation of Greek drama—by Richmond Lattimore, William Arrowsmith, Dudley Fitts, and the others—are obviously a significant component of what I have called the theatre's "enabling context". Nor are they the only present resource we have that is crucially relevant to a potential American life for Greek drama. For in the American modern dance movement—and most particularly in Martha Graham (consider the Daughters of the Night in her *Night Journey*)—we have a solution to the choreographic problem that could beggar the work of the Greeks. Was it any wonder, then, that the defects of the Greeks merely pointed to some of our own superior resources, while their simple virtues suggested how easily these same resources might be gathered and put to work?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

III

Jean-Louis Barrault is much too complex and important a phenomenon even to approach with any adequacy in an omnibus letter. He is beyond question one of the three or four most interesting actors alive; more than that, his company and its repertoire are so cleanly his own creation that he needs to be seen fully—as the complete *homme de théâtre,* and perhaps the only one, besides Bertolt Brecht, now living—to be seen at all. It was peculiar to have him at the Ziegfeld; it was also unreal. For the Barrault company is so vastly superior to anything available on Broadway as to have no effective relation to our working theatre whatever. At best, the only relation it can have is that of some distant and unattainable ideal, which shows up our stingy and drab anti-self of a theatre, but without being able to supply any immediate help at our level. The gap is too great. Broadway of course excuses itself on the ground that Barrault has behind him the whole classical tradition of French theatre with all the special *données* which that provides. This is an undeniable truth; and there is no quick or simple way to compensate for our own failure of tradition. But it is not the whole story; and if we cannot hope for the moment to match Barrault's achievement, we should nonetheless be able to absorb and exploit some of the essential values underlying it. The chief of these is a simple realization of what theatre in its fullest sense can do, of what the art of performance means, of where this joy that is specifically and elementally *theatrical* can be found.

Barrault is the newest and most brilliant phenomenon in the great tradition of Latin comedy—a direct line that runs from the *commedia dell'arte* through Molière and Marivaux and Goldoni, through Debureau and the Funambules, to the Sicilian Players, Luigi Pirandello, and the general Copeau ambience to which Barrault belongs. It is a comic tradition of wit based on evoking an essentially physical response through essentially physical means. It is a tradition whose rogues and comic servants and harlequins and zanies— *its players within the play*—attest to the fully theatrical conception of life from which it springs. It is a tradition not like ours of a wit spoken, but of a wit played. It is a tradition of performance for performance's sake. One has only to compare Meredith's essay on the comic spirit with Bergson's on laughter, and the difference between this tradition and ours is immediately apparent (it is even suggested in the titles of the two works): between the fey intellectual arrogance of the one (witty literary comedy as the purifier of society) and the earthy physical joy of the other (played physical comedy of human situation as the evoker of laughter). For Meredith, the agents of comedy are witty gags; for Bergson they are active gestural devices. For Meredith the response to comedy is conscious and intellectual; for Bergson, it is spontaneous and automatic. For Meredith, theatre is a branch of literature or of thought; for Bergson, it is an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

independent artistic discipline complete in its own right. And it is precisely this traditional difference of mind as to the nature of theatre which makes writers like Molière and Pirandello so difficult to translate—not only into our language, but onto our stage. It is also what makes Ben Jonson, the closest Anglo-Saxon dramatic writer to this tradition (Chaucer being the closest non-dramatic one), often seem an undigested and unpopular sport. (Today the only viable counterpart of the Latin tradition in the Anglo-Saxon world is to be found in the music-hall, in burlesque, and in the circus: the dominion of Charlie Chaplin, Beatrice Lillie, Sid Caesar, Emmet Kelly, and a host of more or less talented variety performers.) To be understood as a phenomenon, Barrault has to be seen against this background; for only it can demonstrate that his pantomime is not merely an individual idiosyncrasy turned theatrical gimmick, but *the* appropriate style to the whole Latin theatrical continuum.

Thus what Broadway chiefly has to learn from Barrault is not something technical like his brand of mime, but this more general vision of theatre as theatre which he so magnificently embodies. For Barrault reminds us that Broadway, so far from being unintellectual (the common charge) is really intellectual to a ghastly degree; and that what it requires is not more thought but more theatre. Snobbishly put, this is merely to say that Broadway ought to leave higher thinking to those who know how, and concentrate on its own business which is the theatrical rendition of life: especially since the intellectualism of Broadway has almost no observable roots in intellect. Anyone who has read Barrault's book (*Reflections on the Theatre*) will have seen weird eccentricities pass with him for thought; but Barrault's verbalizations are not to be taken seriously, representing as they nearly always do some genuinely histrionic perception incapable of verbalization except in some weird or private way. Barrault's thought, in short, is something frothy and useless churned up in the process of making theatre; but Broadway's thought is the very essence of its profession: it is what Broadway plays are made of, and it is the chief substance of every Broadway actor's training. What Barrault therefore should be demonstrating to the Broadway Intelligentsia is that mental gymnastics are much less theatrically valuable than physical ones, and that the miasma of psycho-literary sub-intelligence which floats over Broadway can do nothing for drama but destroy it. What he has already demonstrated is theatre in full performance. The secret of his method lies simply in his undeviating sense of relevance, his perfect knowledge of the difference between a style and a gimmick. And it is a secret that can only be disclosed through a concentration on actual craft, and not in isolation but in the abundance of collaboration which his company, his designers, his composers, and his repertory afford him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews

NORTHROP FRYE

Long Sequacious Notes[1]

MOST OF US THINK OF COLERIDGE, at least for a time, as a writer of bits and pieces. I can still remember the nugget I had to memorize about him in Grade Eight: "A writer of great powers and promise, but incapable of steady work." There is a good deal of patronizing biography and criticism in the same tone, implying that if the critic had had Coleridge's genius and his Wedgewood pension, he would have laid off the opium, not married until he met the right Sara, finished his books and poems, and led a tidier life. But it is slowly becoming apparent that, while Coleridge certainly proposed more books than he ever disposed of, the impression of bits and pieces is not altogether due to Coleridge. Within the last twenty years more and more of the vast bulk of what he actually did write has been coming into view. His letters, his table talk, his Shakespearean and other literary criticism, all form big collections, and Miss Kathleen Coburn, who has already edited his *Philosophical Lectures*, is now, as she says, "working towards an edition of Coleridge's note books", of which there must be at least fifty-four, the highest number in her references.

Preparatory to this, she offers us a collection of over three hundred numbered short notes and aphorisms, gathered partly from the unpublished notebooks and marginalia, partly from prose writings not reprinted in this century, such as *The Friend* and *Aids to Reflection*. It makes excellent reading, and though the editing is unobtrusive, the selection could not have been made without a complete and thoroughly well proportioned knowledge of Coleridge. For the student of English literature I should say it was practically indispensable, even though some of it can be found in other Coleridge collections. By the time all of Coleridge has been printed, we shall be unlikely ever to ask again, "Why couldn't he finish anything he started?" If we have a question of such a type, it is more likely to be, "Why did a man who may well have had a profounder mind than Goethe, and was at least intellectually nearly as versatile, have failed so utterly to make Goethe's impact on modern culture?"

Coleridge's thoughts obviously came to him much as the images of *Kubla Khan* and *The Ancient Mariner* did, as a series of aphorisms crystallizing from his reading. Because these aphorisms contained his essential ideas, the process

[1]INQUIRING SPIRIT. A New Presentation of Coleridge from his Published and Unpublished Prose Writings. Edited by *Kathleen Coburn*. Pantheon. $5.00. THE NOTE-BOOKS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD. Edited by *Howard Foster Lowry, Karl Young* and *Waldo Hilary Dunn*. Oxford. $10.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of translating them into a continuous prose narrative was, in theory, a mechanical piece of copying, to be done at any leisure time. In practice, of course, it turned out to be a deadly dull and painful drudgery, in which he found that he had, so to speak, no gear low enough to keep him moving. Hence he would assert that books were finished because, in one sense, that was true, though in any sense that would interest a publisher they had not been begun. His reputation has suffered from the fact that literature has not yet developed anything analogous to the sculptor's stonecutter.

Everyone is familiar with the way that he floundered through the *Biographia Literaria*. He hung a donkey's carrot in front of himself in the form of a great chapter on the imagination, to which the earlier chapters were the prolegomena. Eventually the chapter arrived, "On the Imagination, or Esemplastic Power," followed by three portentous harrumphs in English, Latin and Greek quotations, and a preliminary flourish on the history of philosophy. Then his will-power digs its heels in and balks; his pen trails off; he writes a long letter to himself advising himself to postpone his chapter until he has time to write a super-colossal work on the Logos, and then, as it is no longer necessary to go in one direction rather than another, he plunges into the critique of Wordsworth that he has had on his mind all along, and the rest of the book again is bits and pieces.

Miss Coburn's method of anthologizing is much fairer to Coleridge than he was to himself, because she preserves the aphoristic quality of his real thinking. In continuous prose, even at his best, he is, as Chesterton says of Shaw, long-winded because he is quick-witted: he thinks of all the qualifications of his idea at once, hence his contemporary reputation for murkiness. In his discontinuous notes we get the bite and point of what he has to say, because it is said in the rhythm of his thinking. Miss Coburn provides, up to a point, something that Coleridge badly needed as a discursive writer: an appropriate prose form.

Like Bacon, Coleridge was much preoccupied with tables of contents, methodological axioms, schemes for others to work out, and intellectual projects and agendas of all kinds. But unlike Bacon, he could not be complacent about this, or about the possibility that his vast Opus Maximum might never be finished. He seems to have felt it imperative to write a long piece of continuous prose in the conventional treatise form. Writing continuous prose is (as I think Kafka says somewhere) an art of causality, in which the ideas form a linear progression. But when Coleridge got an idea, it became a centre to which other ideas simultaneously attached themselves. His importance in the history of semantics is due to his ability to ask of common and significant words, like "mind", "reason", and the like, the same question that, according to Mill, made him the great seminal conservative mind of his age: "What does this word mean by being there, by having all the different associations which it actually

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does have in the language?" (See the fine aphorism numbered 73 in Miss Coburn's book.)

The Aristotelian treatise-book form, what he calls (No. 70) "the paideutic continuous form", was simply not his form. Still less congenial to him, however, was the method of the Platonic dialogue: whatever his opinion of Plato, he detested the whole dialectic either-this-or-that procedure, and maintained that no argument could ever be refuted except by being contained in a more comprehensive system of thought, and so shown to be incomplete. The form that would best have suited his habits of thought was the intellectual autobiography, in which there is no logical continuity, and yet no digression, because the essential informing power—himself—remains in the centre, and everything radiates from it. The *Biographia Literaria* starts with this form, and that is why it is the most sustained of his writings. But it is too strongly attracted toward the systematic treatise to remain in the tradition of, say, Montaigne, or even of the Rabelais whom Coleridge, rather unexpectedly, admired. Carlyle's grasp of romantic ideas was not as secure as Coleridge's, but *Sartor Resartus* is a far better attempt at finding a form in which to expound them.

A great achievement results from the union of a great mind with a great idea: Coleridge had both, but some coagulating or—well—esemplastic power seems to be lacking. The failure to find a prose form is not the cause of this, but one result of it. The glib explanations of the cause, opium, weak will, unhappy love and the like clearly will not do, even if Coleridge himself offers them. I give my own guess for what it is worth. Coleridge seems to have lacked the kind of detachment which is usually the product of a comfortable egotism (he says of Milton, No 131, "The egotism of such a man is a revelation of spirit"). Miss Coburn is, rightly, impressed by Coleridge's many-sidedness, and has arranged his aphorisms in various divisions, psychology, philosophy, science, public affairs, linguistics, religion and others. A certain remoteness from the subject seems to be an emotional advantage to Coleridge. He never claimed to be a man of affairs, and the political section is of an almost unvarying decency and good sense. He never claimed to know much about science and medicine, and he makes some fascinating speculations about them.

But in fields where he was more expert, a panting desire to teach and improve gives a bothered, blustery, self-conscious quality to his style. He can hardly write about the moral side of religion for very long without beginning to scream. In his literary criticism one never knows when he is going to be seized by a moral spasm, and when he strikes a virtuous pose, he can be more pachydermatous than Johnson at his worst. As value-judgements in criticism are largely based on moral metaphors, his sense of literary values suffers accordingly. In his ceaseless denigration of everything French he is little better than the culture-blatherers of our own day who see everything in German thought from Luther to Nietzsche as potential Nazism. His remarks about Gibbon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are embarrassing; his persistent undervaluing of Virgil is clearly derived from his moral disapproval of the second Eclogue, and so on.

Miss Coburn's only editorial appearance in the text is in the headings she gives to the aphorisms, and No. 110, where Coleridge says, "It is still the great definition of humanity, that we have a conscience", she has headed "Conscience —Freedom to Will and Think". But a careful reading of the paragraph shows that while Coleridge may mean that too, he also means conscience in its unregenerate sense of a please-mamma moral compulsion—the conscience of which Huck Finn complained that it nagged him even when it knew no more about the situation than he did. In the same paragraph he distinguishes "the turbulent heat of temporary fermentation from the mild warmth of essential life". It is important to notice that when he expresses one of his major literary ambitions, his mood is usually turbulent and fermenting. (Compare the project for six hymns in the Gutch Memorandum Book: "In the last Hymn a sublime enumeration of all the charms or Tremendities of Nature—then a bold avowal of Berkeley's System! ! ! !") One can get becalmed not only through failing to love God's creatures, but through being too anxious to help them hatch their eggs.

Miss Coburn also emphasizes the modernity of Coleridge in her introduction, and in expressing it she favors the rhetorical question. "Was he not groping towards a *Gestalt* psychology before the gestaltists? . . . had he not a glimmering of Freudianism before Freud? . . . would he not have recognized in Jung's doctrine . . ."—and so on. True, no doubt, and one could fall into the same rhythm almost *ad libitum*. Does he not anticipate Newman when he distinguishes positiveness from certainty, No. 110; Kierkegaard in his note on Dread, No. 37; Schopenhauer in his conception of will and reason, No. 235; the logical positivists when he stresses the necessity of "criterional logic", No. 88; perhaps even Wittgenstein's opening aphorism when he says "The phrase, *true in all cases,* is preferable to *universal*", No. 92; etc., etc? I am not one of those, however, who feel that the ultimate justification of something great in the past is its relevance to the present instead of its own greatness. For instance, in the *Biographia,* ch. vi, where Coleridge cites the case of a hysterical girl to prove that, taking in all levels of consciousness, we never forget anything, he does show "a glimmering of Freudianism before Freud." He goes on to suggest that this total recollection of experience may actually be the last judgment we experience as we pass from flesh to spirit—an idea that no Freudian would get a glimmering of in a million years. And I think the "seminal" quality in Coleridge's thought, the quality that will keep the reader of Miss Coburn's anthology finding good things in it for months after he buys it, can be explained in another way.

Miss Coburn remarks, "The more one reads Coleridge the more impressed one becomes with what can only be called a psychological approach to all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

human problems", and goes on to suggest that the whole shape of Coleridge's thought is psychological. Her opinion is authoritative, and she doubtless has reams of evidence for her statement in the notebooks of which I know nothing. But such an approach to Coleridge seems to me to be bound up with the indefensible view that in Coleridge, as in Blake, the central co-ordinating principle is the psychological one of imagination. The imagination is instrumental in Coleridge: it is the power that unifies, but not the thing to be unified, the real co-ordinating principle. The latter is the Logos, and every aspect of Coleridge's thought is an application of this conception. It leads him, in politics, to see human destiny as emanating from the Incarnation, in contrast to the "psilanthropic" liberal humanism that starts by trying to improve human nature. It leads him in religion to the same perspective, and to a theism which makes the knowledge of nature depend on reason, and reason on the presence of the Logos in the mind (see No. 99). It leads him in philosophy to hail the "second triumphant Coming" of medieval realism, after a reign of nominalism that ran through Bacon and Descartes to the French *philosophes* (No. 99, and compare the powerful analysis of Cartesianism in No. 52). It leads him in criticism to the conception of all literature as contained within an order of words identical with one personal Word—perhaps his greatest legacy to modern thought, and one still unexplored. It leads him even in science to a type of speculation aimed at restoring the system of analogies and correspondences on which medieval symbolism was based (compare No. 185). And although Coleridge's thought remains fragmentary, the fragments are priceless not because they are imaginative but because they are logia. Just as Blake urges us to see the world in a grain of sand, so in Coleridge we have to see the vast ramifying body of the Logos in all the brilliant facets and prisms of these aphorisms, as they come tumbling over one another in a wonderful sweep of mental richness, like the drops in the Cumberland waterfalls that he loved so much to watch.

The reader unacquainted with *The Notebooks of Matthew Arnold* should be told immediately not to expect anything like Miss Coburn's "basket of plucked plums and windfalls", as she calls it. There is hardly anything by Arnold in them; they are not strictly his notebooks but his commonplace books, lists of sentences quoted from his reading. They are in Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian and English, the first five being left untranslated "By the wishes of the members of Arnold's family and of the publishers", according to the preface. Such lists of *adagia* or *sententiae* are a normal part of the training of a humanist scholar: they help him to see his reading as a programme of life, and focus in his mind the best that has been thought in the way in which it has best been said. They throw a light too on Arnold's stylistic habit of repeating a thematic phrase all through a book. Along with the supplementary lists provided by the editors at the end of the book, it forms a valu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able guide to Arnold reading. Otherwise it is difficult to know what to say about this book, which has been edited with great pains and erudition, and is clearly the product of a touching personal devotion to Arnold. The long series of sentences in Greek from the New Testament and Marcus Aurelius, for instance, do not seem to illustrate the way Arnold read them as his published writings do. One can, perhaps, build up a picture of a harassed nineteenth-century contemplative, turning eagerly to Senancour and à Kempis, but forced to listen also to Goethe bellowing into his other ear about the vast and vague merit of getting something done. The conclusion of the main part of the book, a series of quotations dated a week after his death, has in it the melancholy withdrawing roar of the sea of faith, leaving beached a number of shored fragments like those at the end of *The Waste Land*:

> When the dead is at rest, let his remembrance rest; and be comforted for him when his spirit is departed from him. (Ecclus.)
>
> Ipse suas artes, sua munera, laetus Apollo
> Augurium citharamque dabat celeresque sagittas.
> Ille, ut depositi proferret fata parentis,
> Scire potestates herbarum usumque medendi
> Maluit, et mutas agitare inglorius artes. (Aeneid xii)
>
> Society is a sort of organism on the growth of which conscious efforts can exercise little effect. (Karl Marx)
>
> Si est gaudium in mundo, hoc utique possidet puri cordis homo. (Imitation of Christ)

DANIEL AARON

Henry Adams: The Public and Private View[1]

THE WRITINGS OF HENRY ADAMS may no longer be considered controversial, but he very definitely is. Critics find it difficult not to adore or abuse him. Young men especially seem drawn to him as a symbol of something necessary and important in their lives. Perhaps they like him because he is urbane, waspish, fastidious, cosmopolitan, bookish—because he snubs State Street and Wall Street and public officials while apparently having the ear of the influential, because he makes scholarship dramatic and mysterious and finds catastrophe congenial. Many readers, on the other hand, have been repelled by his manner.

---

[1]RUNAWAY STAR, AN APPRECIATION OF HENRY ADAMS, by *Robert A. Hume*. Cornell. $3.75. HENRY ADAMS: SCIENTIFIC HISTORIAN, by *William Jordy*. Yale. $5.00. DEMOCRACY, An American Novel, by *Henry Adams*. Farrar, Straus, and Young. $3.50. THE SELECTED LETTERS OF HENRY ADAMS, ed. by *Newton Arvin*. Farrar, Straus, and Young. $3.75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They think he is vain, snobbish, hysterical. They resent his anti-semitism, his coldness, egotism and perversity, his want of passion. Writers like Adams often encourage intemperate adulation or censure, particularly those who write for the "discriminating few" and are given to prophecy.

Mr. Hume's book is a good illustration of the enthusiastic approach. A passionate disciple, he is not satisfied with describing, sometimes very well, the life and attainments of Henry Adams; he must convince his readers that Adams is "a person of extraordinary knowledge . . . a thinker and a scholar almost without rival", although never displaying "that uncritical warmth of feeling for the precarious cause of mankind so strongly present in a poet like Walt Whitman or in a reformer like Matthew Arnold." He laments, apropos of Adams' failure to get some diplomatic appointment, that "the official Washington mind has chronically refused since the Civil War to avail itself of intellect and integrity". Mr. Hume speaks of Adams' "unmistakeable Socratic greatness" and dismisses "the accomplishments of certain one-time greats" (Irving, Cooper, Bryant and company) as "almost frivolous". Anyone "who appreciates the persistent, subtle drollery of Adams," he says, "is likely to conclude that Mark Twain and others of his tradition are usually mere fumblers in slapstick." I suppose these invidious and needless comparisons are meant to help the "serious readers" whom Mr. Hume addresses in the preface, "to assess and utilize the worthier elements in their diverse heritage". But he endangers his mission. It may turn out that his book will disillusion the "serious reader" who does not discover in Adams the infallible oracle and who still thinks, after reading the *Education*, that Mark Twain is funnier.

For a more detached and reasonable assessment, for information, there is Mr. Jordy's book, unobtrusively brilliant, scholarly without the smell of lucubration. Mr. Jordy is trying to explain, he says, "how an unusually sensitive man quite casually and most ambiguously—that is, more by temperament than logic—embraced the cause of scientific history; how ultimately by his imagination he fused his predilections for science and history, and art as well, into the failure celebrated in the *Education*." But his book is more inclusive. It also traces Adams' impulsive explorations and adventures in a scientific wonderland of thermodynamics, geology, paleontology, anthropology, psychology, and biology—expeditions from which he returned with a learned tan but also with a considerable amount of misinformation. No one before Mr. Jordy has followed so doggedly, if not always devotedly, in Adams' footsteps or listed so meticulously the sources that gave Adams the scientific ballast he needed to hold down his speculations. No one before him has furnished such convincing evidence that Henry Adams' pessimism derived less from the merciless conclusions of science than from an inner disturbance he read into the cosmos.

After pondering over Mr. Jordy's book, one is tempted to regard the *Educa-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion and *The Tendency of History* as esoteric sequels to *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Adams does not favor ship-wrecks and cannibalism, but his positivism has something infernal about it, and like Poe he uses scientific nomenclature to lend an air of coolness and verisimilitude to the incredible. Both, incidentally, are fond of the hoax. The author of *The Rule of Phase*, however, is as serious as the author of *Eureka* even though he tosses out his intuitive hunches in a more playful and tentative way and lays down the law less imperiously. Both Poe and Adams are lovers of logic, unabashed amateurs searching for single causes in a world of multiplicity.

Mr. Jordy does not mention Poe, but he does refer once to Emerson. In 1885 Adams wrote to Oliver Wendell Holmes that while Emerson "was in some respects more than human, he paid for it by being in other respects proportionately less". Adams found Emerson's limitations amusing, but later in life he admitted a kinship to Emerson as well as to other members of the "*Type bourgeois-bostonien*". I think his kinship was closer than he suspected.

Adams never shared the transcendentalist ecstasy, as Mr. Yvor Winters has noted; one cannot imagine him, for example, stopping in the Boston common and dilating like a transparent eyeball. Nevertheless, he hankered for the certainties of a more innocent age and at least gave lip-service to the Instincts if not to Self-Reliance. Is it too far-fetched to see Adams as one of Emerson's scholar-philosophers born too late and set adrift in a non-Emersonian world? It was hard for Emerson to justify his vocation, a thinker in an age of enterprise, but it was even harder for Adams to act the part of *Man Thinking* in his generation. The state of society Emerson speaks about "in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters,—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man" characterized post-Civil War America more exactly. Emerson, the great eclectic, could range all over the universe searching for facts and ideas to corroborate what he already had decided was true, and he could do so with a breezy contempt for established opinion that Adams was always too insecure to feel. Emerson chose to be hopeful in his conclusions about Nature where Adams did not.

Still, their methods of reading and research were not vastly dissimilar (Adams also confused science with pseudo-science, sense with nonsense, according to Mr. Jordy) and both shared certain primary attitudes: a distaste for the mob and a tendency to turn "the people" into an abstraction or a symbol of force; an admiration for practical active men together with a scorn for hucksters; and a strangely ambivalent view toward their respective vocations. Character, integrity, rectitude—these were qualities crucial for both men. Compare Adams' treatment of Napoleon in the *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison* with Emerson's in *Representative Men*. Both come down hard on his moral lunacy. Or compare Emerson's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strictures against Webster, his one-time idol, with Adams' analysis of the venal senator Ratcliffe in his novel, *Democracy*. Both men are splendid and formidable Goliaths struck down by the stone of principle. Finally, any reader can recognize the similarity between Emerson's and Adams' estimates of British and American national character as brought out, let us say, in *English Traits* and the *History*.

Mr. Jordy admires the artistry of Adams, the historian, and writes convincingly of his tendentious arrangement of facts and the sly way he speaks his own thoughts through the mouths of the dead statesmen he dramatically resurrects. Like Mr. Yvor Winters, Mr. Jordy comments on Adams' novelist eye and his "Jamesian insight into the subtleties of human motivation". The elusive personality of Jefferson, for example, fascinated Adams, and he savored his contradictions with the greatest relish. One might go further, moreover, and say that Adams' organic view of history, his "germ" theory which implied, in Mr. Jordy's words, "that the most promising task of history was the recreation of the entire development of an institution or an idea from seed to ultimate luxuriance" complemented James's "germ" metaphor of inspiration: his notion of the "virus of suggestion" which gently exfoliates under the heat of the artistic imagination. Certainly in his concern for logic and order, his shaping and polishing and selecting of facts, Adams showed the instincts of a novelist; but like some other men of the *type bourgeois-bostonien*, he looked upon the story-teller as "a trivial sort of animal" whose first aim should be to amuse and whose "first quality should be superficiality". It is not surprising, therefore, that his one political novel, *Democracy*, is less novelistic (if no less moral) than his nine volume *History*, and that the characters, allegedly drawn from life, lack dimensions. *Democracy* would really make a better play, not only because it is melodramatic and talky and quotable but also because of its very want of denseness and the glibness of its ostensible message.

Yet he was too much of an Adams to believe in unsanctified entertainment. Balzac's moralizing might bother Henry Adams but not his own, and *Democracy* makes that clear. It is an exposé on two counts: of Washington politics and of Henry Adams. Its tone is partly explained by Henry James's story, *Pandora*, in which Adams in the guise of a Mr. Bonnycastle (a most revealing name if anyone wishes to pursue it), is taken off not very pleasantly as a snob who condescends to Presidents and who feels that for Washington his "society was really a little too good". Adams is supposed to have written *Democracy* for the amusement of the "Five of Hearts", a club made up of the Adamses, the Hays, and Clarence King, and the novel's anti-democratic bias only expresses more elegantly and entertainingly the bias of Hay's *The Breadwinners*. The heroine, a rich and contemplative widow, hopes to plumb the mysteries of Washington politics, "to see with her own eyes the action of primary forces". Moreover, she is fascinated by power. Soon she meets the man who can, she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thinks, provide her the answers. He is a senator from Illinois, a Websterian figure, virile and capable, and what is most dangerous of all, a corrupted idealist. Mrs. Lee feels the magnetism of this "Prairie Giant of Peoria", but she is revolted, too, by his animality. Just in time she comprehends his fatal taint and rejects this symbol of raw democracy, force without refinement, for a more respectable representative of old republican virtue. Her America, we learn, can already give Europe lessons in depravity, and in another century, Adams has an honest European aristocrat predict, Washington "will be more corrupt than Rome under Caligula".

Now Adams always had a keen nose for corruption. Words like "decay", "degradation", "chaos", "panic", and "convulsion" interlace his prose, and he seems almost to enjoy the diagnosis of moral disease. In *Democracy* and elsewhere in his correspondence, his sensitivity to death and doom amounts to a kind of self-flattery. To see the vileness of his times and yet not to capitulate, to look catastrophe in the face without skulking or grumbling, as one of his characters puts it—this takes courage of the highest sort, and it is the courage demanded only of the natural *aristoi* since they are the only ones capable of discerning just how bad the situation is. The highest morality, for Adams, is impossible without superior insight.

This is a Jamesian distinction, and both Adams and James reserve a special place for fools, or the unseeing ones. Adams also liked to put his real and fictive protagonists, fools and non-fools, into what James called "morally interesting situations", and watch them behave. How would Thomas Jefferson act when embarrassed by the scurrilous traducer, James T. Callender (an episode penetratingly examined by Mr. Jordy), and how would the Illinois senator respond when asked to make the choice between party and principle? For Adams and for James, the sinful man was a moral imbecile; but Adams, shrinking from the leprosy of sin, is more true to his ancestors, more Hawthornesque, than his expatriate friend. In his bookish moments, he could explain it all through metaphors of extinct fish and the mechanics of tropism, but his heroine (and I am convinced, his alter-ego) in *Democracy* is only a sophisticated and witty cousin of the stern Hilda in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*. Sin to her and to Adams is a personal affront, and yet it fascinates and excites them because if one is careful, it can be enjoyed vicariously and in perfect safety. So Madeleine Lee leaves the fetid capital after her glimpse of wickedness, secure in her wealth and social reputation, just as Adams, to paraphrase Mr. Jordy out of context, hides behind his time and class after his bit of genteel muckraking.

And perhaps this is really the clue to his inveterate amateurishness—that he was unwilling to sever his "connections", and that throughout his life he peered out at the world like Paul Pry. Mr. Jordy speaks of Adams' "lack of self-confidence which habitually sought a protective buffer against the world"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and describes him as standing "behind a plate-glass window which reflects the surrounding panorama". Timidity and fear of exposure confined him too close to his study and kept him from being a journalist, a diplomat perhaps, and even a novelist. He relied on acquaintances and books for his knowledge, but raw experience frightened him. Hence his furtiveness, his love of masks and deceptions.

Henry James resembled him temperamentally. He too was fastidious, given to hyperbole and melodrama, womanish in his fears and feminine in his sensibilities. Like Adams he was chagrined by his dwindling public and appalled by the future. But James was a professional writer as Adams was never a professional anything, a novelist enamored of his art and committed to his vocation, who imposed inflexible standards upon himself and maintained them. Adams, as he confessed to George Cabot Lodge, loathed "the strenuous life" and "never loved strenuosity either mental or physical". A beautifully disciplined writer, a literary man in the most admirable sense, he could still indulge himself to the point of intellectual irresponsibility and spend his talents like a wastrel.

Perhaps, as Mr. Newton Arvin has said in his fine introduction to *The Selected Letters of Henry Adams*, it was in his letters "that Henry Adams realized himself most completely, with the least uncertainty and unnaturalness, as a writer", because writing letters for Adams was at once a discipline and a relaxation. He could be irresponsible without the risks that attended his public declarations, even the pseudonymous ones, and express himself to friends unambiguously. Thus in his correspondence, Adams dropped the pretense of judiciousness and said outright that the French were indecent and immoral, that the Russians lacked energy, art, and manners, and that John Hay's *The Breadwinners* was "quite at the head of our Howells'-and-James' epoch for certain technical qualities, such as skill in construction, vivacity in narration, and breadth of *motif*". His letters contain other proofs of parochialism and nonsense, but many of them are extraordinary evocations of experience, both physical and mental, almost oriental in the way they can blend the precise with the general. His descriptions of Samoa or Tahiti, for example, are simply poems in an artfully plain style, and he is able, as Mr. Arvin points out, to suggest a whole man with a few fine sharp strokes. He can be superficial, but more often he is effortlessly and unflaggingly intelligent, turning his mind like a search-light on the momentous and the trivial.

Mr. Arvin's selection of letters runs from 1858, when the young Adams, already formed, already distinctive, was writing amusing reports to his brother Charles from Germany, until the last days of his life when he likened himself to a Quincy woodchuck dying in solitude. What he lost in ebullience and hope he gained in style, but notwithstanding his isolated bursts of confidence (which Mr. Arvin notes), the universe grew sick and declined with Adams'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expectations. There were times after the Civil War when he did believe in his future, when he wrote to an English friend somewhat royally, "I can fancy we are of use in the world, for we distinctly occupy niches which ought to be filled". Gradually, however, he discovered that he was "politically extinct". What he called "the one-sided flabbiness of America" paralleled his own bodily decline; his remnant of courage went down with the *Titanic*.

In his *Education* and in his letters, he made the universe culpable for his much discussed failure; despite his elaborate professions of humility, he blamed society and President Grant. "Grant," he wrote to his brother in 1911, "wrecked my own life, and the last hope or chance of lifting society back to a reasonably high plain." Yet he was too astute, too Puritan, to fool himself. Of course his need for something to cling to was unfeigned, but so, I think, was Madeleine Lee's self-confrontation in *Democracy* ("that over-ambitious and hard-featured book", as he described it) when she admits "her hysterical dread of sorrow and suffering, her narrow sympathies, her feeble faith, her miserable selfishness, her abject cowardice". This is habitual over-statement. Henry Adams was not a "mass of pretensions unfounded" or a "miserable fraud", and he knew it; but a man who judged the infirmities of others with a physician's eye was not likely in his private thoughts to palliate his own. Suffering refined him; humor and irony sustained him; but unlike Emerson's scholar, he dared not trust his impulses. He insulated himself against those currents of force and energy memorialized in his greatest work.

ROBERT PHELPS

The Vision of Henry Green[1]

THE WRITER IN WHOSE WORK THERE EXISTS something like a true marriage between vision and medium, is, today, so much the exception that in reckoning with him—with a poet like Robert Graves, or a novelist like Henry Green—we have to acknowledge a difference in kind. He is more, perhaps, like a composer. His works are more organic. They can be distinguished from, but never very profitably compared to, those of less "married" writers.

Graham Greene, for instance, might seem as obvious a contemporary as any with whom to compare Henry Green. A novel like *The Power and the Glory* certainly has virility of vision, and it is masterfully made. Yet Graham Greene's prose, for all its aptness of simile, is more housekeeper than wife to what he is saying. It speaks up distinctly, and it never lies. But it is never bedded down

[1]PARTY-GOING (1939); CAUGHT (1943); LOVING (1945); BACK (1946); CONCLUDING (1948); NOTHING (1950); DOTING (1952). By *Henry Green*. The Viking Press. Each, $3.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with or instinctively begotten upon, as the most casual passage in Henry Green may be:

> At night shutters, and in front of these, curtains covered by a Morris design, closed all sound of the cedar out as it groaned under the weight of snow or, in other weather, absolutely black in moonlight as the wind outside swept through and through.
>
> *(Caught)*

> In spite of summer and that it was dawn, there was already a log fire alight as Edge moved across to draw one pair of curtains, merely to look at the weather, or to lower a window perhaps, she did not know, but the room influenced her to act on graceful impulse.
>
> *(Concluding)*

It is by his self-committal to the very feel and flex of the stuff he is working with that Henry Green makes these images his own, and so much more than documentary. With the exception of Faulkner, is there anyone else writing English today who could, or would, write as sure, resourceful, and original a sentence as this one, from *Doting?*

> Chattering away, having fun with the Sicilian who, on being asked how their lobster would be cooked, said 'in rice very nice, in the shell very well', they altogether ignored, as they decided against this lobster, miracles of skill spun out a few feet beneath: no less than the balancing of a billiard ivory ball on the juggler's chin, then a pint beer mug on top of that at the exact angle needed to cheat gravity, and at last the second ivory sphere which this man placed from a stick, or cue, to top all on the mug's handle—the ball supporting a pint pot, then the pint pot a second ball until, unnoticed by our party, the man removed his chin and these separate objects fell, balls of ivory each to a hand, and the jug to a toe of his patent-leather shoe where he let it hang and shine to a faint look of surprise, the artist.

A mirror has been made of the syntax itself, its "miracles of skill" corresponding in grace, intricacy, and gratuitousness to the juggler's own, with the apposition at the end balancing there as quietly, as breathtakingly, as the jug on the juggler's toe.

Henry Green's vision is discernible in his earliest works,[2] but in the novels

[2]His first novel was published in 1926, on the recommendation of Edward Garnett, and after John Buchan had assured his parents that "Henry would never make an author". Called *Blindness*, it is quite literally about a struggle, under extreme circumstances, to make contact. A public school boy is peremptorily blinded by a broken train window, and his frantic gropings to orient himself are harshly set off against his earlier success at school, where he had secured himself behind the *persona* of an arty snob. Green's second novel, *Living* (1929), explores the relationships among a number of Midland foundry workers, and although here too, the reiterated pattern is one of alienation, it might be presumptuous to make too much of its thematic relation to the works that follow. It was published before Green was 25, and is separated by time as well as intensity from the novels which began to appear in 1939.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

since *Party-Going*, it has declared itself on every page. As undidactic as Virginia Woolf's, it is yet as intensive, as saturating, as Lawrence's. Over and over it dramatizes our attempts, largely by speech, to make contact with each other, and the hazard and failure for the most part sustained. Our imperfect apparatus for expressing ourselves—whether in exchanging commonplaces or making love; this, and our equally obstructing incapacity for understanding what is being expressed to us, are at the heart of Green's sense of human experience. What makes the dialogue in his books so moving and real is just the fact that, unlike the conversation in ordinary novels, which moves neatly and coherently ahead, Green's often stands still, or blurs, because the people who speak so rarely understand, much less acknowledge, what is in turn being said to them. Almost invariably, there is some loss, some ambiguity, which then breeds the suspicion, fear, and aloneness in which most people live.

Each novel shapes itself in the same way. The daily, unsensational, simply *happening* aspects of people's lives are brought into focus by the participle in the title. (We never get a mere "slice-of-life" in Henry Green, though we do have the sense of uncoerced reality which was an aim of that technique.) People talk, manoeuver, hope. They wait, betray, are betrayed. They chaff, endure, or break down. And through it all, we see their perennial efforts to impart themselves to one another. Then once in a while, by a sort of grace, two of them will find their way into the warmly mutual miracle which is love: Raunce and Edith in *Loving;* Charlie and Rose at the end of *Back;* Elizabeth and Sebastian all through *Concluding;* the parents in *Nothing.* But they are the exceptions. The others remain outside.

In *Party-Going* there are no lovers. Everyone fails. Held up by a fog-bound train, their usual sequences suspended while they wait in a hotel room, half a dozen people jockey each other for four hours, trying to love, trying even harder to be loved, and finishing up where they started. They can make no more contact with each other than with the crowd of commuters below their window, who remain an abstraction for them, possibly dangerous if roused, of the "dear British public". They are as far from knowing any truth about each other, even when two of them are in bed together, as they are from knowing the truth about the gate-crasher whose attempt to get into an embassy party they speculate on throughout the book. No one can belong to anyone, or join anything. There are no parties, except in name.

In the books to follow, as the lovers appear, their presence only sets off more sharply the desperation of the unloved. (If *Party-Going* is able to be a very funny book at times, this is because everyone is in the same boat: there is no white to make their gray look black.) In *Caught,* it is Pye's jealous relation to the widower Richard Roe (who at least has once known what it was to be loved) which finally breaks him, aggravating his at-first hallucinatory and then real persecution, and ending in his suicide. Charlie's paranoia, in *Back,* is wholly a matter of his own remembrance of a lost love, and his wish

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to revive it. And in *Loving*, where in their own ways, the old nanny, the cook, and the boy Albert know as much "wrath and weeping" as *Nightwood's* Dr. O'Connor, their loneliness is made all the more unbearable for having Edith and Raunce obliviously falling in love before their eyes.

This obliviousness is the crucial point about love in Henry Green's world. It amounts to a second innocence, a re-entry into Eden. It is non-Christian in the sense that instead of shouldering more awareness, more responsibility, more knowledge, it sheds them. The most self-absorbed, and inadvertently the cruellest people in Henry Green's novels are the lovers; the lovers, that is, and the children, from whom they differ only in age. Human existence consists of being born into a sense of belonging; of falling into a sense of aloneness which can only rarely be allayed; and then, if you are lucky, of eluding that knowledge and slipping back into a sense of belonging. Edith and Raunce are so successfully secured by their love that they can not only skip, heartlessly, without even leaving a word of explanation behind for their friends, but even, in an exquisite touch, persuade the final sentence of the book to abet them by assuring us that "over in England they were married and lived happily ever after".

To the lovers and the unloved, *Concluding* adds the children, and illuminates their three-way relations with a richness of insight and symbol that makes it not only Green's masterpiece but one of the century's as well. The children are all girls, an uncounted bevy of them, young, soft, fresh, bewitching, their names all beginning with M, for they have yet to discover their separateness (at least all but one of them, who has run away, and the calling search for whom echoes throughout the book). They inhabit the orderly world of a boarding school. At the novel's climax, they are all waltzing down a ballroom floor in celebration of their school's founder, "the young in one another's arms", intoxicated, at one, indivisible. As they do so, they are sadly, fiercely watched by the unloved: by the Misses Baker and Edge, the school's spinster directors, and by Mr. Rock, the world-famous scientist who has been pensioned off to a cottage on the school's grounds. Of these three, Mr. Rock is the fullest sufferer, for Baker and Edge have not only a future, but a collaboration, however loveless, between themselves. They are not entirely alone. Mr. Rock is. He cannot even look to his granddaughter Elizabeth, for she and Sebastian, one of the school's tutors, are the lovers. And though they themselves are saved, though they alone of the adults can lose themselves in the children's dance, still they cannot be aware of even the possibility of helping anyone else.

At the end of the evening, when the girls are in bed and the lovers have slipped off, after a full day's anxiety, suspicion, rejection, Mr. Rock and Miss Edge come face to face. They are at war, but if they are to have any succor, it must come from themselves. For a gently fatigued ten minutes, their defences relax. They confess that they are both old, they try to accept each other. But then the imperfection of human intercourse intercedes. At some slight mis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

understanding, they shy, bristle, and resume their barricades. Their parting is cold. Mr. Rock makes his way through the darkness and wet grass to his cottage; lonely, truculent, self-deceived; a summary image of everything that unloved, unloving, uninnocent man must be.

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Henry Green has never inclined to write the sort of book reviews and personal essays which obliquely rationalize and explicate his own practice as a novelist. But in 1950, in two talks delivered over the BBC's Third Programme,[3] he did discuss some of his current novelistic aims, and in the light of the two books he has published since, what he said is significant.

He begins with two axioms. (1) Art "exists to create life". (2) "If you want to create life, the one way not to set about it is by explanation." He goes on to attack the "know-all" novelist and the narrative technique whereby "the writer, who has no business with the story he is telling, intrudes like a Greek chorus to underline his meaning. . . ." He does not merely mean the Thackerayan outrage of talking behind the characters' backs, but any form at all of the author getting between his readers and his characters. "Do we know, in life, what other people are really like?" he asks. "I very much doubt it. We certainly do not know what other people are thinking and feeling. How then can the novelist be so sure?"

This, of course, is where any conscious novelist must begin today. To what extent, in a story, is a "know-all" point of view compatible with experience as we apprehend it? What we call the "omniscient method" began to be assumed in the 18th century, and amounted to a logical extension of a view which presumed the universe to exist in the objective third-person and to consist in a finite number of facts which had only to be observed impartially to be understood. In one hundred years, it had become the norm: for Flaubert the artist had to be "invisible and all-powerful" in his work. But at the same time James, and after him Conrad and Ford, were recognizing that reality is never so real as when it is restricted to an apprehending point of view. Finally, and in the same decade, appeared *Ulysses*, Everest and finale of the story in which the recorder is "refined out of existence", as Stephen Dedalus had prescribed, and Proust's great soliloquy, in which the full circle is reached and once more, as in Dante, everything depends upon a subjective, remembering "I" which is the author's own.[4]

---

[3]Published as "A Novelist to His Readers", in *The Listener*, for Nov. 9, 1950 and March 15, 1951. There also appeared, in the Aug. 23, 1951 issue, a less analytical piece called "A Fire, A Flood, and the Price of Meat", which engagingly describes "the sort of experience I, as a writer, have been allowed to witness, in life, by which people would seem to be drawn together, as into a book." I should add that I have not seen an essay called "The Future of the Novel," which appeared in *Contact* for Aug., 1950.

[4]It is not insignificant, incidentally, that a large number of our most original works of prose narrative since Proust have done the same thing: e.g., *The Enormous Room;* Isherwood's Berlin stories (in spite of the lame disclaimer that "Christopher Isherwood is a convenient ventrilo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Henry Green does not go this far. He agrees that omniscience is presumptuous, unreal; but not that a particular point of view—much less the author's own—should replace it. If many of his contemporaries have begun to use the monologue, Green insists that "communication between the novelist and his reader will tend to be more and more by dialogue." The recorder must neither know everything, nor be constrained by individual limits. He must simply be *outside*: watching, listening, and passing it all along with as little interpretative aside as possible. Indeed, as Green goes on to say:

> What I should like to read, and what I am trying to write now, is a novel with an absolute minimum of descriptive passages in it, or even of directions to the reader (that may be such as "She said angrily", etc.) and yet the narrative consisting almost entirely of dialogue sufficiently alive to create life in the reader.

In other words, a play, without the context of the visual stage. (Green acknowledges that his only reason for not using the theatre or the radio is the clutter of actors and scenery which such media necessarily place between a creator and his audience.)

So what we have is this: one of our most gifted novelists proposing to limit himself—and in the name of a "greater reality"—to a form of story-telling which will render experience only in terms of what the people to whom it is happening *say aloud*. Of course Green has always used dialogue; and in his novels up through *Concluding*, he has used it in a manner that other novelists can only envy. But it has always been supported by commentary. By its very nature (something which is being *told*), a novel is a reflective affair. It may employ dialogue, as the stage does, but its unique possibilities lie in its wide margin for speculation, analysis, and interpretation. This is what the greatest novels, whether Chaucer's or Proust's, Jane Austen's or Tolstoi's, have in common. To reduce the novel's means to dialogue alone amounts to a perverse purification, like painting with only the primary colors. Could dialogue alone, as Green proposes to use it, have purveyed the final scene between Mr. Rock and Miss Edge, or dramatized Pye's paranoia?

For an answer, we have only to look at Green's two most recent novels. Called *Nothing* and *Doting*, their texts do consist "almost entirely of dialogue", a bland, tailored chit-chat spoken by the most extroverted, over-simplified, and tiresomely stylized characters in contemporary fiction. Both books are

---

quist's dummy, nothing more") and *Prater Violet; The Tropic of Cancer* and its sequels; *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men;* all of Genet; or that curious first novel by Peggy Bennett, *The Varmints*. Even *Finnegans Wake* is channelled in the first person plural, and in its closest foreground amounts to the joyous loquacity of a man who loves word-play for its own sake. And outside prose, neither the gravely avowed "I" in the *Four Quartets*, nor the overtly personal one in *The Cantos*, can be called "objective correlatives" or "personae" in the sense that Prufrock or Mauberly can. Emerson was right: "these novels will give way, by and by, to diaries and autobiographies."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more like early Evelyn Waugh than anything else Green himself has written, and for me at least, their most moving passages are ones which, as far as their author's theory is concerned, are illicit: the descriptions of the juggler (in *Doting*) and of the banquet room before the guests arrive (in *Nothing*). It's true as well, I think, that not one of the characters or relationships in either book (including the most interesting one, that of the middle-aged man and the little girl in *Nothing*) would be out of place in a sophisticated soap opera. And of any emotional state so intricate, self-conscious, or true as Mr. Rock's, or Charlie's, or Pye's, there is not even the possibility. For even if the people in *Doting* and *Nothing* are more than the mannered cut-outs they appear, we would not know any more about them than the drawling banter they exchange with each other. What they think about what they are saying is obstinately suppressed.

That some relation exists between Green's insistence on so debilitating a technique, and the triviality of what, in a book like *Doting*, it allows him to say, seems obvious. When an artist's vision is truly and intensely upon him, he creates without *a priori*, wrongheaded purification of his means. He is as "impure" as he needs to be. Look at Faulkner's early books, or any of Jean Genet's, or James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Look at Green's own novels before *Nothing*, where he will twist syntax, analyse at length, interpolate a parallel story, seize anybody's point of view, even his own as omniscient narrator, to accomplish his purpose. It is only as his vision has relaxed that he has begun to fuss with rules and devise theories which conveniently *prevent* his writing what, apparently, he no longer can or wants to write.

It may seem ungracious and presumptuous to say this about the man who is easily the best English novelist of his generation, but it is true. It is true, too, that an artist of Green's dimensions tends to work in what literary historians later call "periods". Green has had a precocious youth (has anyone under 25 ever written a novel with more life and originality than *Living?*); and as mature and productive a "middle period" as any novelist writing today. If *Doting* suggests that the vision which sustained it has lapsed, this does not mean that sooner or later (there was a decade's break between *Living* and *Party-Going*) we may not have novels which will be as worthy of *Caught* and *Concluding* as *The Tempest* was of *Lear*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Index to Volume V

AUTHORS

Aaron, Daniel: Henry Adams: The Public and Private View (review) ... 608
Arrowsmith, William: *The Cyclops*, trans. from Euripides 7
The Decade of Five Iliads (review) 432
Barbarow, George: Dreiser's Place on the Screen 290
Rashomon and the Fifth Witness 420
Barbour, Thomas: Three Poems 258
Baro, Gene: The Horseshoe Crab (verse) 88
Becker, William: Notes on the Broadway Season 99
Missing: A Milieu for Theatre 276
Broadway Letter 593
Bennett, Joseph: The Lyre and the Sledgehammer (review) 295
Bentley, Wilder: Four Poems 510
Blackburn, Paul: Three Provençal Poets (translations) 58
A Communication 317
Blackmur, R. P.: The Atlantic Unites 212
Busby, C. R.: A Communication 317
Clay, Richard: Very Sharp for Jagging (story) 349
A Beautiful Night for Orion (story) 522
Cruttwell, Patrick: A Reading of the Sonnets 554
de Angulo, Jaime: Seven Indian Tales 165
Elliott, George P.: Faq' (story) 72
Fitzgerald, Robert: Translations from Horace and Catullus 56
Frank, Joseph: Neo-Classicism and the French Novel (review) 128
Paris Letter 582
Frye, Northrop: Long Sequacious Notes (review) 603
Geist, Stanley: Fictitious Americans 199
Gold, Herbert: Notes from La Vie de Bohème 260
Christmas with Larceny Coming (story) 571
Gottlieb, Beatrice: Stage Personality of Martha Graham 282
Graves, Robert: Jungian Mythology 245
Five Poems 517
Halsband, Robert: Boswell and His Masquerade (review) 443
Hecht, Anthony: A Poem for Julia 83
Holloway, John: The Critical Intimidation 474
Johnson, Ben: Rome Letter 270
Johnson, Carol: Two Poems 388
Kaplan, Harold: Words in Winter (verse) 90

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kenner, Hugh: Alice in Empsonland (review) 137
Joyce's "Exiles" 389
Kerman, Joseph: Beethoven: The Single Journey 32
Terror and Self-Pity: Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* 409
Klonsky, Milton: Jack the Giant Killer (verse) 346
Lewis, R. W. B.: The Topics of Discrimination (review) 308
Mercier, Vivian: Traduttore—Traditore 116
Merrill, James: Two Poems 86
Merwin, W. S.: Four Portuguese Poets (translations) 66
East of the Sun and West of the Moon (verse) 496
Monas, Sidney: Dry-Goods and a Ghost (review) 448
Morgan, Frederick: Seven Novels (review) 154
Nemerov, Howard: Four Poems 375
Phelps, Robert: The Vision of Henry Green (review) 614
Rans, Geoffrey: English Literary Magazines 111
London Letter 423
Roethke, Theodore: Three Poems 514
Rudikoff, Sonya: Clarity and Force in Gertrude Stein (review) 148
The Root of the Matter (review) 453
Russell, Peter: A Communication 460
Simpson, Louis: Good News of Death (verse) 233
Smith, Grover: Equilibrist with an Eagle (review) 314
Stauffer, Donald A.: The Mouse in the Macaroon (verse) 520
Sterling, Thomas: Still Waters (story) 379
Stevens, Wallace: Eight Poems 325
Stiles, George: Sudden Danger (story) 91
Sweeney, James Johnson: The Word Was His Oyster 404
Tate, Allen: The Man of Letters in the Modern World 335
The Swimmers (verse) 471
Wagner, C. Roland: A Central Poetry (review) 144
West, Ray B., Jr.: The Unity of *Billy Budd* 120

BOOKS REVIEWED

The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams: *Joseph Bennett* 295
Back, by Henry Green: *Robert Phelps* 614
Barabbas, by Par Lagerkvist: *Sidney Monas* 448
Birth of a Hero, by Herbert Gold: *Frederick Morgan* 154
Boswell in Holland 1763-1764, ed. by Frederick A. Pottle: *Robert Halsband* 443
Caught, by Henry Green: *Robert Phelps* 614
The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: *Joseph Bennett* 295

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Collected Later Poems of William Carlos Williams: *Joseph Bennett* .. 295
The Common Pursuit, by F. R. Leavis: *R. W. B. Lewis* 308
Concluding, by Henry Green: *Robert Phelps* 614
Democracy, An American Novel, by Henry Adams: *Daniel Aaron* 608
Doting, by Henry Green: *Robert Phelps* 614
The Dwarf, by Par Lagerkvist: *Sidney Monas* 448
The End of the Affair, by Graham Greene: *Frederick Morgan* 154
Epitaph of a Small Winner, by Machado De Assis: *Sidney Monas* 448
The Fancy Dress Party, by Alberto Moravia: *Sidney Monas* 448
The Fields of Light, by Reuben Arthur Brower: *R. W B. Lewis* 308
Gertrude Stein: A Biography of her Work, by Donald Sutherland: *Sonya Rudikoff* 148
The Groves of Academe, by Mary McCarthy: *Sonya Rudikoff* 453
Henry Adams, Scientific Historian, by William Jordy: *Daniel Aaron* 608
The Holy Sinner, by Thomas Mann: *Frederick Morgan* 154
The Iliad, transl. E. V. Rieu: *William Arrowsmith* 432
The Iliad, transl. W. H. D. Rouse: *William Arrowsmith* 432
The Iliad, transl. Alston Hurd Chase and William G. Perry, Jr.: *William Arrowsmith* 432
The Iliad, transl. William Benjamin Smith and Walter Miller: *William Arrowsmith* 432
The Iliad, transl. Richmond Lattimore: *William Arrowsmith* 432
Inquiring Spirit, ed. by Kathleen Coburn: *Northrop Frye* 603
Intermission, by Calvin Tomkins: *Frederick Morgan* 154
The Journal of a Tour to Corsica, and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli, by James Boswell: *Robert Halsband* 443
Letters of Gustave Flaubert, trans. and selected by Richard Rumbold and J. M. Cohen: *Joseph Frank* 128
The Lost Childhood and other Essays, by Graham Greene: *Grover Smith* 314
Loving, by Henry Green: *Robert Phelps* 614
Make Light of It: Collected Stories of William Carlos Williams: *Joseph Bennett* 295
The Necessary Angel, by Wallace Stevens: *C. Roland Wagner* 144
The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold, ed. by Howard Foster Lowry, Karl Young and Waldo Hilary Dunn: *Northrop Frye* 603
Nothing, by Henry Green: *Robert Phelps* 614
The Novel in France, by Martin Turnell: *Joseph Frank* 128
Party-Going, by Henry Green: *Robert Phelps* 614
Paterson, Books 1, 2 & 3, by William Carlos Williams: *Joseph Bennett* ... 295
Paterson, Book 4, by William Carlos Williams: *Joseph Bennett* 295
Requiem for a Nun, by William Faulkner: *Frederick Morgan* 154
Rome and a Villa, by Eleanor Clark: *Sonya Rudikoff* 453

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Runaway Star, An Appreciation of Henry Adams, by Robert A. Hume: *Daniel Aaron* 608
The Selected Letters of Henry Adams, ed. by Newton Arvin: *Daniel Aaron* 608
Siddhartha, by Hermann Hesse: *Frederick Morgan* 154
The Spendthrifts, by Benito Perez Galdos: *Sidney Monas* 448
The Strange Children, by Caroline Gordon: *Frederick Morgan* 154
The Structure of Complex Words, by William Empson: *Hugh Kenner* .. 137
Two: Gertrude Stein and her Brother, and Other Early Portraits, by Gertrude Stein: *Sonya Rudikoff* 148
William Carlos Williams, by Vivienne Koch: *Joseph Bennett* 295

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED